



MARVEL'S ANT-MAN: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

263

THE WORLD'S
#1
SCI-FI MAG

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS!**

**SPY-FI
SPECIAL!**

STARRING:
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MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE -
ROGUE NATION!
MORE!

THE MAN FROM

UNCLE

THE SPY CLASSIC GETS SUITED AND REBOOTED

PLUS!

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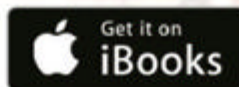


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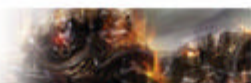
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'For lovers of myth, legend
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SUNDAY SUN

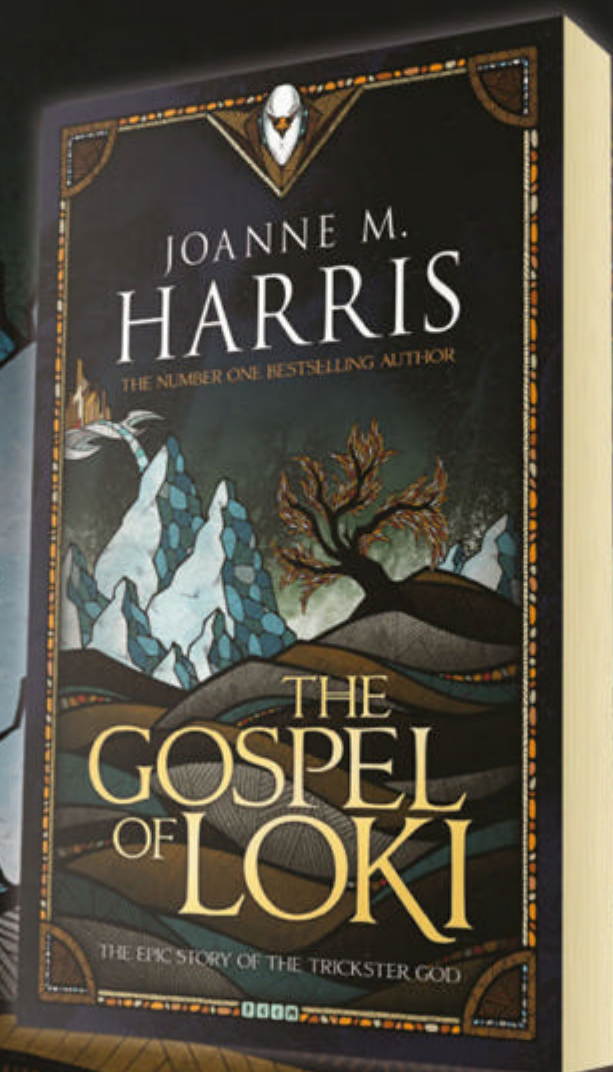
'Lively and fun'

THE SUNDAY TIMES

'Witty and magical'

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THE INSIDE SKINNY

What your *SFX* chums are thinking about...

RICHARD EDWARDS EDITOR

RAVES

■ The news of legendary make-up artist Rick Baker's retirement feels like the end of an era. But I hope there'll always be a place for prosthetics.

RANTS

■ I'm sad that Daniel Craig gets to be a Stormtrooper in *The Force Awakens* and I don't. Lucasfilm: I'm available for *Episode VIII* or the Anthology movies if you need me. Please?!



NICK SETCHFIELD FEATURES EDITOR

RAVES

■ Had a great time at the *Doctor Who* Symphonic Spectacular. Big dumb thrill to see Daleks gliding about before my eyes... I just love the way they move! No, not in a sexy way. Shut up.

■ Looking forward to Anthony Horowitz's Bond novel *Trigger Mortis*. Still can't decide if the title is genius or diabolical but everything else is ticking the right boxes.



IAN BERRIMAN HOME ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

RAVES

■ *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* is stunning. Particularly love Paul Kaye's performance.

■ Now the teasers are starting to arrive I'm getting excited about *Ash Vs Evil Dead*.

■ Pleased that British creators are getting in on this superhero TV lark with *The Wicked + The Divine* – just ordered the first trade collection.



JORDAN FARLEY COMMUNITY EDITOR

RAVES

■ *Mad Max: Fury Road* may have ruined all other action movies for me. George Miller is a genius.

■ *Inside Out* is really something special. Favourite Pixar film since *Toy Story 3*.

■ Best SF films at this year's Cannes Film Festival: *The Lobster* and *Tale Of Tales*. Both barmy, both brilliant.



ALEX COX OPERATIONS EDITOR

RAVES

■ Hugely excited for Channel 4's Swedish-robo-drama-remake *Humans* to start. By now you'll have seen it, and you'll know if it's rubbish or not. But don't tell me, eh? I'm stuck here in the past, with no creepy robots hanging around my house. Yet.

■ Speaking of synths, have a listen to "Furious" by Javarnanda. It's good.



RUSSELL LEWIN PRODUCTION EDITOR

RAVES

■ *Mad Max: Fury Road* is not only visually stunning but has some of the most remarkable action sequences ever put on film. By far the best *Mad Max* movie.

■ And another reboot that is so much better than the original: *Thunderbirds Are Go*. It's snappier, better looking and more entertaining.

■ The *SFX* 20th birthday party at the BFI was fun!



JONATHAN COATES ART EDITOR

RAVES

■ *The Man From UNCLE* looks like it's going to be so much fun. Can't wait.

■ Loved the brilliant *What We Do In The Shadows*, particularly Jonathan Brugh's sleazy vampire slacker, Deacon. Best vampire movie ever?

■ Enjoyed Mark Gatiss and Matthew Sweet waxing lyrical about Bond movies on iPlayer. My favourite is still *The Spy Who Loved Me*.



DAVE BRADLEY GROUP ED-IN-CHIEF

RAVES

■ Thoroughly enjoyed the National Film and Television School's charity gala in London. Shared my love of *Columbo* with Steven Moffat!

■ Completed *Dragon Age: Inquisition*... after a mere 120 hours. Value for money, right?

■ *Tomorrowland*: a muddle, but oddly uplifting and optimistic with a whiff of old-fashioned Disney adventure about it. I liked it.



ADRIAN HILL AD MANAGER

RAVES

■ I Want To Believe that the return of *The X-Files* is going to be a fantastic return for my two old pals Mulder and Scully. Forget the two films, as they lost the excitement and suspense of the original series. Technology has come a million miles since the series finished, so I hope the FBI has invested in new phones, ones not the size of a Snickers bar. Alien-infested Wi-Fi anyone?!



ALEX THOMAS DESIGNER

RAVES

■ As a Frank Miller devotee, Marvel's *Daredevil* was pitch perfect! Vincent D'Onofrio's Kingpin is terrifically enigmatic.

■ The trailer for DC's *Legends Of Tomorrow* is pure superhero fun – more enjoyable than a dozen gloomy *Batman Vs Superman* clips!

■ Brian K Vaughan and Fiona Staples' *Saga* is the best comic book on the newsstands – how long before it gets turned into a movie or TV series?!



KRISTIANNE STANTON MARKETING MANAGER

RAVES

■ I don't think "excited" covers how I feel about the upcoming *Suicide Squad*. Especially seeing that image of Jared Leto as the Joker – can't wait!

■ Surprisingly intrigued by *Inside Out*. The concept is one that just seems to make me smile every time I catch the trailer. Definitely on the to-watch list this year.



RHIAN DRINKWATER SUB-EDITOR

RAVES

■ I'm currently rewatching *Angel* from the start. It stands up really well – and Wesley still has one of the best character arcs ever shown.

■ *The Flash* finale was excellent. It's quickly become one of my favourite series.

RANTS

■ The *Gotham* season finale was seriously underwhelming, though...



There's nothing the entertainment industry likes more these days than a recognisable brand. After all, why would you want to waste time selling a new product to the world when you can give them something they already know and have a lot of affection for?

It's a state of affairs that makes me a little sad – if this is the future, will there be room for movies like *Edge Of Tomorrow* to come out of leftfield and be amazing? – but even so, I can't help getting excited about some familiar names making a return. Like *The Man From UNCLE*, the classic '60s spy show that's been rebooted by Guy Ritchie. Our Nick flew out to Rome to get all the intel from cast and crew, and we decided this was a great excuse to take a look at some other big hitters from the undercover world of spy-fi: James Bond's return in *SPECTRE*, and *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation*.

Carrying on that big name theme, we've spoken to *Fantastic Four* writer/producer Simon Kinberg about giving Marvel's first family a gritty, hard SF makeover, and visited the set of *Pixels*, where some of the biggest icons in videogames (think Donkey Kong and Pac-Man) have been terrorising the planet.

Then, with the Marvel Cinematic Universe having recently eclipsed *Harry Potter* as the most lucrative movie franchise of all time, we take a look at its smallest resident, to find out how *Ant-Man* director Peyton Reed is going to make his hero punch well above his weight. If Marvel can make a star of a talking tree, turning a man who natters with ants into an icon should be a doddle...

Rich

Richard Edwards, Editor
@RichDEdwards

PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON LEES

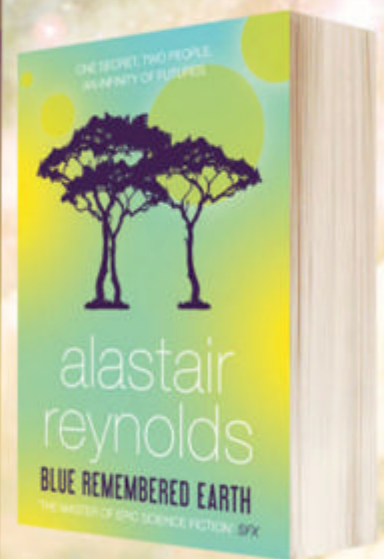
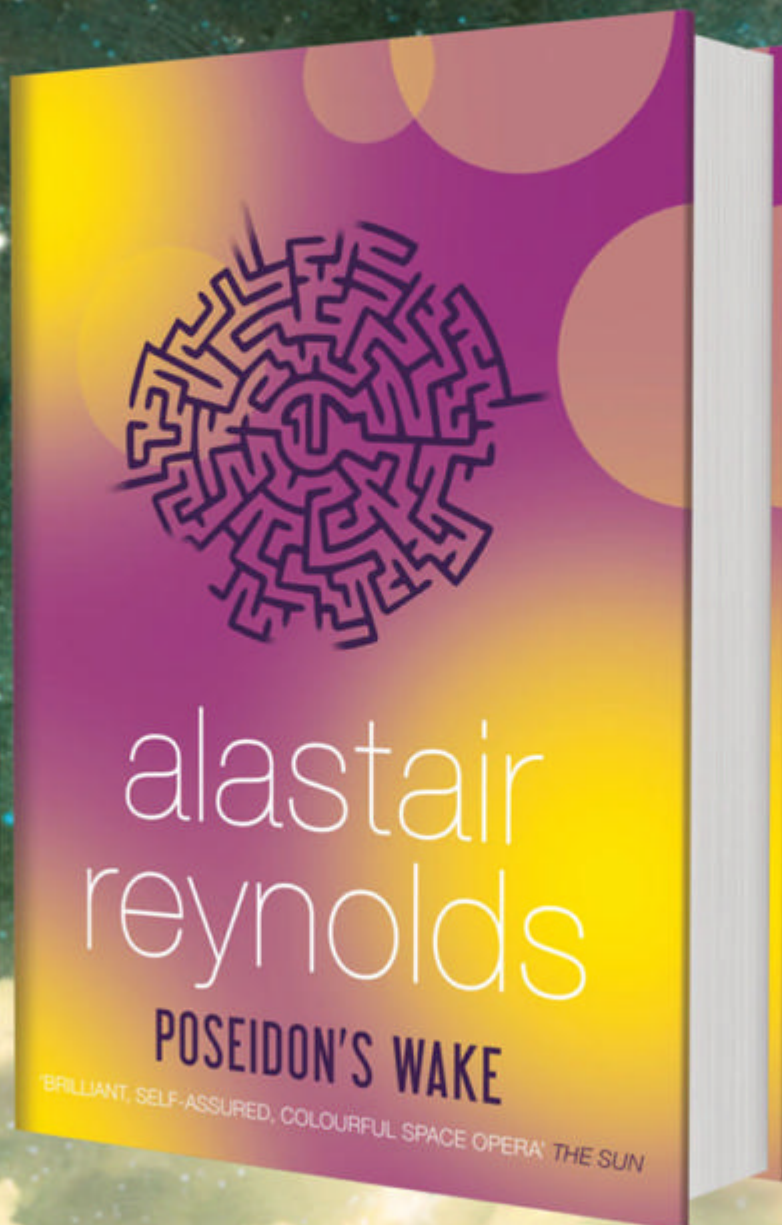
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RED ALERT

THE FUTURE FIRST

edited by Jordan Farley

SELF/LESS

Body Double

Ben Kingsley's consciousness invades Ryan Reynolds' body in mind-transfer thriller



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**LIFE
SUCKS**

Guillermo del
Toro's vamp series
The Strain returns
for season two.



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**GAME
ON**

Ready Player
One's Ernest
Cline talks new
novel *Armada*.



25
**KRYPTON
UNCOVERED**

New documentary
reveals the secrets
of Tim Burton's
Superman Lives.

DEATH IS THE ONLY PART of life that affects and judges everyone equally, regardless of achievement and power. But how hard must it be for someone who has the world at their fingertips to accept the same fate as the rest of us? What if there was a way to cheat death, for those few able and willing to pay the price?

These were the questions that inspired the makers of *Self/less*, in which a dying billionaire with everything to live for uses all of his worldly resources to prolong his life, with horrific results. "The inspiration for the story came from watching those

Apple presentations that Steve Jobs used to do in the years before he died," says Àlex Pastor, who co-wrote the *Self/less* script with brother and writing partner David Pastor. "The press kept reporting on his battle with cancer. So we thought: here's this man, he's on top of the world, brilliant, incredibly successful, and wealthy, and yet he's running out of time, and his money can't save him. So this sparked a provocative series of questions for us: what if this was a world where your money could actually save you; a world where, under the right circumstances, an average Joe would trade places with him?"



SCI-FACT!
Self/less writers David and Àlex Pastor previously wrote the Chris Pine 2009 viral horror *Carriers*.



YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE

More secrets from the minds behind *Self/less*

ONE LIFE IS ENOUGH

1 Sir Ben Kingsley doesn't share Damian's fear of death. "Life is finite, not infinite," says Kingsley. "I think it's an odd and rather dumb aspiration to want to live forever, because you will remove all the wonderful ingredients that drive you to fall in love, have children, to build monuments. I think we healthily translate our mortality into things that may have a life after we've gone. But as soon as you know you're going to live forever, I bet you that all of your ambition goes."

OUTSIDE INFLUENCE

2 Although writers Àlex and David Pastor are SF veterans, many of their influences weren't genre-related. "The more interesting references are the ones that don't even belong to the world of sci-fi, or even film," says Àlex. "We've talked about Steve Jobs. *The Power Broker*, a biography of Robert Moses, definitely inspired the character of Damian. The title means the opposite of selfish, but if you break it down it seems to suggest a disembodiment, a lack of a true identity, or a sense of self."

GROUNDING FUTURE

3 *Self/less* takes place entirely in the present, in a world where the secret of mind transfer technology is hidden under the surface. "We feel a special attraction to the '30 seconds into the future' branch of sci-fi," says David Pastor. "It allows you to connect directly with the audience... We took a page from the *Inception* playbook, where Nolan presents a world where the technology that allows you to infiltrate dreams exists, but he never tells you how it actually works."

PERSONAL TOUCH

4 Kingsley has high praise for *Self/less* director Tarsem Singh. "Tarsem is a man from the Indian subcontinent where they completely accept the idea of reincarnation, destiny, fate, cause and effect, karma, and finishing unfinished business," says Kingsley. "Because he has this great bigger picture of the universe, I feel extremely secure in Tarsem's mythology. He embraces love, life, loss, separation and redemption. All this comes from his massively rich heritage."



The drinks trolleys in first class were definitely getting weirder.



Sir Ben Kingsley plays Damian, the dying billionaire and New York real estate tycoon who's offered immortality by Albright (Matthew Goode), an innovative, psychotic scientist. Albright represents a shadowy organisation in the process of changing the world through the consciousness transfer technology they control. "My character, Damian, has a massive ego," says Kingsley. "He is in complete denial. He is at the height of his powers, then the hourglass turns and there's not much sand left in the top half, and he realises, 'I thought it happened to other guys, but I am dying.' But he dodges it and finds a way out by collaborating with a genius and avoids death."

After Damian accepts Albright's offer, he undergoes a radical medical procedure that transfers his consciousness into the body of a healthy, younger man, played by Ryan Reynolds. "Damian takes over Ryan's body, so Ryan also plays Damian's character," says David Pastor. "Both Ben Kingsley and Ryan Reynolds play the same guy. But where did Ryan's body come from? That's the crux of the movie, the conflict that drives the second half of the story as the origin of the body is unburied."

For Damian, the immortality he receives turns out to be more frightening than his perception of death. "When he finds himself with Stage 4 cancer, he experiences something he hadn't experienced in a long time: he feels powerless," says Alex. "There's nothing he, or his money, or his influence, can do to save him. Except, of course, there is, when this shadowy organisation offers him life, but in the process they take away from Damian everything that made him powerful: his name, his connections, money. He becomes a prisoner in a gilded cage, experiencing a different kind of powerlessness. It's also no coincidence that Damian works in real estate. This is a man who has built huge structures that double as monuments to him. Damian's always heard that those buildings

"I think the purer a story is, the more you provoke the audience"

were his legacy, his own form of immortality, not unlike the Pharaoh's pyramids. And yet, when he's staring death in the face, he realises that that's BS. He wants the real thing."

Self/less is directed by *Mirror Mirror*'s Tarsem Singh and produced by Ram Bergman and James D Stern, the producers behind 2012's *Looper*, a film whose character-focused approach the filmmakers sought to emulate here. "Tarsem is clearly a director known for his unique visual style, but for this film he chose a more classic and grounded approach," says Bergman, who's set to work on *Star Wars Episode VIII* with *Looper* director Rian Johnson. "Albright's lab is a great example. I think the normal impulse would have been to make it this flashy lair of tech wizardry, but Tarsem elected to give it this highly mobile, run-and-gun, cobbled together look that just immediately made sense given the extreme secrecy under which Albright operates."

Kingsley has accumulated a long list of genre credits throughout his illustrious career, going back to 1995's *Species*, but it was the simplicity and universality of *Self/less* that drew the Academy Award-winning actor to the project. "I think the purer a story is, the more you provoke the audience," says Kingsley. "And this is a very, very pure story. You can put it in one line: 'Once upon a time, a king died and turned into a prince.' It's one line. It could have been set in Egypt, 3,000, 4,000 years ago with Pharaohs and pyramids. Hopefully, this little pure ripple will go into hundreds of different directions in the minds of the audience." 

Self/less opens on 17 July.



What price would you pay for immortality?



SCI-FACT!
Guillermo del Toro's next
novel, *Trollhunters*, is out
early July.

UNDER THE DOME

Domes Day

Answers abound in the third season

● While its first two seasons offered more than their share of mysteries, *Under The Dome* will, in its third year, finally give viewers some answers. Chief among them, the reason why the titular Dome came down. According to executive producer Neal Baer those answers will be provided in part by a new character, played by *CSI*'s Marg Helgenberger, who provides this season's "story engine".

"We introduce Christine Price," Baer tells *Red Alert*, "an anthropologist, who we learn has been in Chester's Mill ever since the Dome first came down. The shocking reason for her being there - but not seen by anyone in the town - will be revealed. We also introduce Kylie Bunbury as Eva, Christine's protégé and assistant. She too has been under the Dome since the beginning and she will play a divisive role in breaking up Barbie and Julia - and will become Barbie's new love interest, vying for his affection and doing anything to stop him from loving Julia."

Season three begins with a two-hour premiere that quickly brings those unfamiliar with the show up to speed. "We will learn that some of the characters we've grown to love may be possessed by some strange life force that will cause them to turn against their fellow Millers. Ultimately, this season focuses on the individual versus the group. How can individual emotions like love, fear, anger, shame and sadness be suppressed in order to make the group work together to help bring down the Dome?"

Although creator Stephen King will be less involved this year, his presence will still be felt. "Stephen has got movies and a number of series... but we have his blessing. There's a creepier factor in this season, which is really paying homage to Stephen." **SFX**

***Under The Dome* returns on 25 June on CBS and later this year on Channel 5.**



"So everyone brought a backpack, but no one brought a tent?"

Chapter two:
humanity
fights back.

THE STRAIN

The Bite Stuff

The vampire plague is on the verge of sucking New York City dry

PROVING VAMPIRE STORIES still have some life in them yet, *The Strain*, based on Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's book trilogy, is back for a second season picking up with the Big Apple suffering from a horrific vampiric pandemic.

In season one small pockets of humans in the know, like CDC scientist Dr Ephraim "Eph" Goodweather (Corey Stoll) and Professor Abraham Setrakian (David Bradley), created the first line of resistance against the vampires. Executive producer/showrunner Carlton Cuse tells *Red Alert* that season two, which is loosely based on book two *The Fall*, will reveal more factions of humanity joining the fight.

"Season one was really about the spread of the epidemiological crisis that turns into the very nascent stages of a vampire apocalypse," Cuse explains. "People were learning and accepting that there were vampires on the loose in New York City. Season two is now that people accept they exist, what are they going to do about it?"

Cuse teases that different strategies will arise to stop the various developing stages of bloodsuckers rising. "In the case of Eph and Nora (Mía Maestro), they decide to take all of their knowledge of how to fight the disease and find a way to kill these

vampires. For Setrakian, his goal is to get his hands on the *Lumen*, a book which is purported to contain the information to kill the Master.

"And then New York decides to fight back," Cuse says with some glee. "What happens a lot in society, whether it is Nazi Germany or [Fascist] Italy, the ability to organise society in chaos comes in the form of a person and for us it's Justine Feraldo, played brilliantly by Samantha Mathis." A Staten Island City Councilwoman with loyal cops at her disposal, Cuse says Feraldo immediately tips the playing field. "She appears out of nowhere and is a wild card force who is able to make headway against the vampires but does so by suspending every civil liberty there is."

As for the evolution of the vampires' army, Cuse tells audiences to be prepared for new visual assaults from the mind of del Toro. "He has no peer when it comes to creature creation. If you read the books, you get a clear sense of all of the different forces that our characters will face. We bring in a couple more this season and I absolutely love the way Guillermo rendered them. It's just awesome!" **SFX**

***The Strain* season two begins on 12 July on FX in the US. A UK airdate is TBC.**



STAR TREK BEYOND

Perhaps surprisingly, the film's not called *Star Trek: The Triumph Of Scotty...*

Beyond The Final Frontier

Simon Pegg is putting the fun back into *Trek*

AFTER TAKING ON THE ROLE OF Scotty in the first two rebooted *Star Trek* films, Simon Pegg has been assigned extra duties for the forthcoming third instalment. Set to be directed by *Fast & Furious*'s Justin Lin and titled *Star Trek Beyond*, Pegg is currently co-writing the screenplay with Doug Jung (*Banshee*, *Dark Blue*).

"It's an enormous responsibility but I've enjoyed the pressure," he admits. "I was terrified at first because it's such a huge commitment to take on. But pressure can be a good thing in that kind of situation, as necessity is the mother of invention, as they say, and that has certainly been the case in the last three months."

Having stated that they want to return *Star Trek* to its traditional series roots, Pegg and Jung are adopting a brighter tone that is more in keeping with the frontier spirit of Gene Roddenberry's vision. "I think it'll be lighter than the last one," he says. "With that film, it's there in the very title, as *Star Trek Into Darkness* sounds quite dark, even though the movie is full of lightheartedness. I feel like *Star Trek* is not *The Dark Knight*, although that's not to say that it should make fun of itself."

He also near-as-dammit confirms the speculation that Idris Elba has been cast, possibly as the principal villain. "Idris was approached and I believe that is in the mix at the moment," he reveals. "So as far as I know he is going to be in it and I certainly hope he is because he's extraordinary." **SFX**

Star Trek Beyond opens on 8 July 2016.

AERIAL ASSAULT

SF TV ROUND UP



NEWBIES

David Lynch back on board Showtime's **TWIN PEAKS**. Reports say the season could now run to 18 episodes, and that Lynch will direct every ep. Damn fine news!

George A Romero's **EMPIRE OF THE DEAD** comic heading to TV with Romero and Peter Grunwald on script duty.

Kieron Gillen and Jamie McKelvie's heavenly comic series **THE WICKED + THE DIVINE** being developed for the small screen by Matt Fraction and Kelly Sue DeConnick's production company Milkfed Criminal Masterminds. Universal TV have already snapped up the rights.

Ben 10 studio bringing cannon-armed videogame character **MEGA MAN** to TV in 2017 as a 26-episode animated series - just in time for his 30th anniversary.

Disney musical **TANGLED** heading to TV as a 2D animation. Zachary Levi and Mandy Moore return to voice Flynn Rider and Rapunzel.

Quantum Of Solace director Marc Forster's untitled outbreak drama receives 10-episode series order from NBC.

Continued on p19.

"Could I do it? Abso-f**king-lutely. Would I do it? Abso-f**king-lutely... But it'd be very, very different if I did it."

James Bond could go full hard man if Jason Statham has his way.

SCI-FACT!

John Connolly hosts a radio show on 2XM called "ABC To XTC" focusing on the music of 1977-89.

MY SCI-FI

John Connolly

The author of the Charlie Parker mysteries reveals his sci-fi loves



John clearly has good taste in magazines.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY FILM

I love John Carpenter's *The Thing*. I think it's the last great gasp of hands-on model making in the genre before CGI. And because I'm so anti-CGI I'm prepared to forgive any little lapses in it, just because of the sheer imagination that went in to creating the effects. I've read the book too, but the book is terrible and meandering, and Campbell wasn't a very good writer. But a lot of the stuff that I love about the film, the blood test, is there already in Campbell, and in that way it's very prescient.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV

Doctor Who, without a shadow of a doubt. If I could get one TV writing gig it would be to write for *Doctor Who*. As for which Doctor, it's Tom Baker for me. He was the Doctor even when he wasn't the Doctor. Even on the street he was the Doctor; he was eccentric, he was bohemian - he didn't even have to try terribly hard to be the Doctor.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY BOOK

My favourite writer is John Wyndham and my favourite book of his is probably *The Chrysalids*. When I first got an adult library ticket the first books I took out were HG Wells' *War Of The Worlds* and John Wyndham - I went looking for Wyndham. I just think that in a way he was so un-English, and he was so imaginative.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY GUILTY PLEASURE

I shelled out on the boxset of *Space: 1999*, and I remember being terrified by this episode when they found this ship containing a creature that would pull people in, a tentacled thing. But when I watched it again it was really crap!

A Song Of Shadows is published by Hodder & Stoughton and is available now.



SCI-FACT!
Chloë Grace Moretz was initially attached to play Maggie but dropped out due to scheduling conflicts.

Who else would you want looking after you when you're undead?

MAGGIE

The Walking Dad

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Arnie swapping guns for hugs in new zombie flick

ARNIE GOES ARTSY

1 In *Maggie*, Schwarzenegger plays it straight as Wade, a tight-lipped farmer who's forced to care for his zombie-infected daughter. "Arnold's known for his action and initially you think this script wouldn't fit him," director Henry Hobson tells *Red Alert*, "but there's a side of Arnold here that I don't think has ever been seen before. He came to meetings with a really strong sense of character and what he wanted to do and it blew me away. There are no catchphrases, it's purely about him being a father," he adds. "It's a very different performance for him."

HUMANITY'S BEEN TERMINATED

2 In Hobson's dystopian future, a mysterious disease has attacked all forms of life. "Whatever happened triggered the death of plant life as well as human life," says Hobson. "Electricity is

running out. You can tell that something has happened that's had a knock-on effect. There's a depression and decline in the world and by shooting it in a way that highlights the beauty despite all the death, I think, makes it more tragic," he adds. "The film captures a really interesting cinematic landscape that's very different. That was the intention."

MAGGIE'S INFECTED

3 Abigail Breslin plays Maggie, the titular teen on the turn. Having fallen victim to the virus, she's rescued by dad and returned home to wait out her deadly transformation. "*Maggie* is a story about a girl whose incurable disease manifests itself in this deathly way," says Hobson. "Wade's on a journey to find his daughter and bring her home but he hasn't thought about what that means for everybody else in the town. There was this naturalistic energy to what Abigail was able to bring to

the screen. There's a great moment where she mocks Arnold's accent. She saw that relationship building and gave it more humanity."

IT'S AN INTIMATE AFFAIR

4 "You only very briefly glimpse the wider world and then you're immediately taken to the smallest possible environment, which is an isolated rural area," says Hobson of Arnie, Abigail and the dying world. "Unlike other zombie projects, intimacy is something that perhaps hasn't been played on because people are still in awe of either the look or speed of the zombies, or the gore and violence," he says. "The zombie genre has the opportunity to do very personal stories and I wanted to make sure this world felt intimate and personal."

IT'S GOT BRAINS... BRAINS!

5 The zombie genre has been many places in recent years and with *Maggie*, Hobson hopes to take it to new and thoughtful levels. "It's a powerful story and I wanted to give it that extra depth," says Hobson. "The way I looked at it was through a cinematic lens that shows the tearfulness of the emotional drama. Being able to take the well-trodden path of zombie movies and do something new with it felt interesting. There are tissues and tears and moments of gore, and a cinematic beauty to it as well." *SFX*

Maggie opens on 17 July and is reviewed on p94.



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ARMADA

The Next Starfighter

Ready Player One author pens another love letter to geek culture

WHEN ERNEST CLINE wrote *Ready Player One* – the pop culture-infused epic about an Easter Egg hunt in a virtual world – he looked to the future while cramming his tale full of references to his videogame and film-filled past. The same is true of Cline's second novel *Armada*, which marks the culmination of a life-long obsession with science fiction in its many guises.

"In some ways this novel is even more ambitious than my first," Cline tells Red Alert. "I never thought that *Ready Player One* would appeal to anyone other than me because it seemed so specific. I've tried to do that again – write what I know. And this is full of stuff I know."

Set just a few years in the future, *Armada* is the story of Zack Lightman – a high school student who becomes part of the front line defence against a space-based alien invasion. The reason? He's very good at videogames.

"My idea is: 'What if all the videogame consoles in the world could be used to control drones in real time across space and allow the gamers of the world to fight off an alien invasion?'" Cline says. "Large parts of the videogame industry were set in motion to train

people in planes or tanks. I think it's a viable defence strategy if aliens invade... provided we have decades to create drones and hide them all over the world, which is the situation I create in *Armada*."

So far, so *The Last Starfighter*. But in *Armada*, *The Last Starfighter*, *Ender's Game*, all of pop culture has in fact been engineered to prepare us for an extraterrestrial onslaught.

"Underpinning *Armada* is the idea that the way pop culture unfolded was by design, not just some accidental series of events," Cline explains. "There were forces at work to make me want to grow up and build a cockpit out of couch pillows in front of my TV and practise playing *Defender* and wish I was fighting aliens. *Star Wars* and everything that followed – all that ended up preparing the world.

"I wanted to do the ultimate alien invasion story where it's aware of all those tropes, talks about all those tropes and when the alien invasion mirrors tropes from our own science fiction the characters think, 'That doesn't make sense, why would this be like the movies?' The kind of story I'd never seen." **SFX**

Armada is published on Thursday 16 July.

SCI-FACT!
Steven Spielberg is set to direct a feature film version of *Ready Player One*.

What if pop culture was really about preparing us for war?



STAR TREK/GREEN LANTERN

Emerald Enterprise

Captain Kirk meets Hal Jordan

● After *Doctor Who* and *Planet Of The Apes*, it was only natural that IDW's next *Star Trek* crossover should involve "the greatest space-based comic book franchise of all time". Written by Mike Johnson and drawn by Angel Hernandez, *Star Trek/Green Lantern: The Spectrum War* sees Hal Jordan coming up against the current cinematic incarnation of the original USS Enterprise crew.

"All of the iconic *Trek* cast have important roles to play – and rings to bear – and each of the Lantern colours will be represented," Johnson tells Red Alert, confirming that the story centres around the Lantern Corps' rainbow-based Spectrum. "Embracing that gives opportunities not just for epic battles, but also for plenty of meaningful character moments given the emotional nature of the rings."

Revealing that "Hal has to deal with the existence of a Starfleet and a Federation that doesn't exist in his reality," while Kirk and co have to come to terms with the concept of superpowers, Johnson believes that the two properties have much in common. "They both embrace a spirit of epic wonder and unlimited possibility..." he reasons. "The differences tend to be in how those similarities play out. For all its extraordinary sci-fi, *Trek* still explains and extrapolates within the boundaries of science. But the *Lantern* universe plays by more traditionally superheroic rules, where incredible things are accepted at face value. So any difficulties that result from combining them are opportunities to explore the ideas that each franchise embodies." **SFX**

Star Trek/Green Lantern: The Spectrum War #1 is published in July.



The Red Lanterns are currently in hiding.

STAR TURN

Gemma Chan

The robo-actress on Channel 4's AI drama *Humans*

THE HUMAN LEAGUE

▶ "*Humans* is set in a parallel present in London; in a world where we have these things called Synths, these advanced humanoid robots which work for us in the home, the workplace, in schools, etc. We start with this suburban family who purchase my character, a Synth called Anita, to try and make life easier, but they soon realise Anita is not quite like the others."

STRANGER THAN FICTION

▶ "It's very grounded, very character-driven. And I thought it was a refreshing take on the AI genre. We've seen AI thrillers with robots there to wipe out humanity or enslave us, and all that kind of thing. Which is great, but I love that this show shows us all different aspects of society and how this technology has impacted on our everyday lives emotionally and philosophically, raising this question, 'What does it mean to be human?'"

ARE FRIENDS ELECTRIC?

▶ "Anita's Synth personality is like a mirror to the rest of the family she lives with: each family member has a different reaction to her depending on what their pre-existing attitudes are towards this technology. The mum is very threatened by the presence of something in her house that's looking after her children and – on the surface – better than her."

DO THE ROBOT

▶ "[Playing a Synth] is a very challenging, physical job. You can't take anything for granted. I had to learn to be ambidextrous, we weren't allowed to blink too much and you couldn't breathe too much either. Usually as an actor everything is connected to your breath, anything emotional can be connected, but this works the opposite way."

BACK TO THE FUTURE

▶ "I think we've always been interested in artificial intelligence but now we're at a stage where the technology is coming to fruition. I would buy a Synth. I would be curious, I've got a curious mind and I have to know what it'd be like. I'd want it to have lots of fun, I'd take my Synth out clubbing. Maybe we'll explore that in series two!"

Humans is currently airing on Channel 4 on Sundays.





SCI-FACT!
Alfred Bester created
Legends Of Tomorrow's Big
Bad Vandal Savage in *Green
Lantern* #10, 1944.

SPOTLIGHT

**SPOILER
WARNING!**

What new US genre shows will be worth your time later this year? We investigate...



Legends Of Tomorrow features suits, specs and shooters.

DC'S LEGENDS OF TOMORROW

► The promised spin-off of *Arrow* and *The Flash* has arrived packed with six superheroes including the Atom (Brandon Routh) and White Canary (Caity Lotz). The whole lot of them are collected by former Whovian Arthur Darvill, who plays time-traveller Rip Hunter. He needs the heroes to help him stop supervillain Vandal Savage throughout time. Looks like a much lighter entry into the DC TV universe and, as they say, variety is the spice of life. **Airs: The CW, early 2016.**

SUPergirl

► Also from the creators of *Arrow*, *The Flash* and *Legends Of Tomorrow*, *Supergirl* is all about the coming-of-age of Superman's cousin, Kara Zor-El. As her human alter ego Kara Danvers (Melissa Benoist), the Kryptonian has been hiding in plain sight. Now in her early twenties and assisting diva Cat Grant (Calista Flockhart), Kara decides to come out of the shadows and into her destiny. Has potential so long as they don't go rom-com with Kara. **Airs: CBS, November.**

THE FRANKENSTEIN CODE

► Mary Shelley's cautionary tale gets contemporised with *The Frankenstein Code*. Two scientists bring back to life an old, disgraced cop as his younger self.

Rob Kazinsky plays the cop who gets a forced do-over

The 7,957th version of *Frankenstein*. Approx.



Fear The Walking Dead – because they're not very nice.

but the question is what will he do with this new lease on life? Make the same mistakes or make amends? It's a clever spin on the off-done story but perhaps a bit too on the nose. **Airs: Fox, early 2016.**

FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

► The prequel series will go back to the early days of the zombie apocalypse hitting Los Angeles. The personal angle will focus on two LA schoolteachers, Madison (Kim Dickens) and Travis (Cliff Curtis), trying to get their blended family through what seems like a pandemic that goes very dark. Don't look for origin answers regarding the cause of the walkers but do expect more personal stories driving the stakes and scares. **Airs: AMC, late summer.**

MINORITY REPORT

► Set in 2065 after the events of the Tom Cruise film adap,



A Tom Cruise-free *Minority Report*.

three Pre-Cogs (seers of crimes before they happen) are trying to live among humanity now that Pre-Crime has been abolished. However, they are still getting future flashes. Featuring the visual tech that made the Spielberg adaptation of Philip K Dick's story so memorable, *Minority Report* looks like it will satisfy that hard sci-fi itch.

Airs: Fox, autumn.

THE EXPANSE

► The beloved sci-fi/fantasy book series by Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck (under the pen name James SA Corey) gets adapted into a 10-hour space opera set 200 years into a dire future for humanity. The large cast is anchored by Thomas Jane as Josephus Miller, but also features names like Shohreh Aghdashloo, Chad Coleman and Jonathan Banks. Syfy calls it its most ambitious series ever, which piques our interest. **Airs: Syfy, December.**

THE X-FILES

► With everything getting rebooted or resuscitated, why not have Fox Mulder and Dana Scully return for more paranormal truthiness? Despite the last, disappointing, *X-Files* film, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson returning to their iconic roles is a total win because of the incredible appeal of their characters and the actors who play them. **Airs: Fox, 24 January 2016.**

HEROES REBORN

► It's back! Just shy of a decade since *Heroes* first debuted, the series returns with brand new super-powered humans (led by *Chuck's* Zachary Levy) and familiar faces like Noah "HRG" Bennet (Jack Coleman) and Hiro Nakamura (Masi Oka). Billed as a limited series of 13 episodes, a brisk run might breathe new life into the franchise and get rid of the bloat that vexed its later seasons. **Airs: Fox, autumn.**



"You will make the new *Heroes* good!"



RIVERS OF LONDON

Lee Sullivan has brought the characters to life in svelte fashion.

AERIAL ASSAULT
SF TV ROUND UP

SHOWRUNNING

► **GOTHAM** promotes Morena Baccarin's Dr Leslie Thompkins and Nicholas D'Agosto's Harvey Dent to regulars.

► **AGENT CARTER**'s first season finally airing on UK TV from 12 July on Fox. Season two will move the action to LA.

► Justin Molotnikov directing a two-part tale for **DOCTOR WHO** series nine, while Steven Moffat has confirmed he'll remain as showrunner until at least series 10.

NEWS WARP

► SF author **JOHN SCALZI** signs \$3.4 million deal with Tor Books to produce 13 novels over the next 10 years.

► Bethesda announces development on **FALLOUT 4**.

► **GODZILLA** recognised as an official citizen of Japan and will serve as tourism ambassador for the Shinjuku-ward.

► Voting for this year's **DAVID GEMMELL AWARDS** is now open. Pick your favourite from the shortlist at www.gemmellawards.com, until the polls close on 17 July. Prizes will be presented at the Nine Worlds event on 8 August.

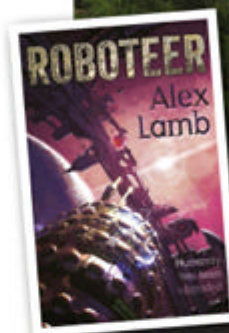
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NEW AUTHOR

Alex Lamb

The AI researcher turning science fact into science fiction

Lamb has been compared to Alastair Reynolds and Peter Hamilton.

WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE AS *ROBOTEER*'S COVER BLURB?

► The outcome of mankind's first interstellar war hangs in the balance. Within weeks, Earth's oppressive new government will finally crush its former colonies. But one ship on a secret mission stands to make all the difference. Its job: to sneak across human space to discover the secret of the terrible new weapon in Earth's hands.

Though the starship Ariel is over a mile long and teeming with robots, its human crew are crammed in a shielded cabin just metres wide. Will Kuno-Monet is responsible for running a ship comprised of the most dangerous and delicate technology that mankind has ever devised. He is the Roboteer.

HOW LONG DID YOU WORK ON IT?

► It took about nine months to write, originally, though I tinkered with the ideas and plot extensively before that. Getting it noticed took a decade.

DID YOUR DAY JOB HELP YOU COME UP WITH THE CONCEPT?

► Absolutely. My background was in AI research and by the time I wrote *Roboteer* I'd worked extensively on human-computer interaction. What astonished me was the way machine intelligences were always portrayed as logical and supremely intelligent when the reverse is likely to be true. Emotional processing underpins embodied intelligence, and human-level reasoning is extremely hard to attain. That means we'll have dim, emotional robots before we have cold, smart ones, and human intervention will have to make up the difference. I wanted to write about a future that reflected that reality.

WHICH SF/FANTASY AUTHORS WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO IN A DREAM REVIEW?

► Iain M Banks, Neal Stephenson, Dan Simmons, Frederik Pohl and Jack Vance.

Roboteer is published on 16 July.

Capital Comic

Ben Aaronovitch's novels are getting a new spin

SET BETWEEN *BROKEN HOMES* and *Foxglove Summer*, Titan's *Rivers Of London* spin-off comic highlights one of Peter Grant's smaller assignments. With author Ben Aaronovitch describing *Body Work* as "a story about haunted cars", next month's first issue fittingly opens with a man drowning after his vehicle plunges into the Thames at Putney.

"It's more complicated than that but I don't want to spoil anything," teases Aaronovitch, who will co-write the five-parter with Andrew Cartmel. "The subsequent suspicious death investigation uncovers what the rest of the police like to call, 'weird bollocks'. This being a *Rivers Of London* case, it soon escalates into a life and death struggle in a junkyard and a surprising connection to a pre-war Folly case."

Claiming that he is "quite ruthless" with their appearances, Aaronovitch insists that the novels' supporting cast will only show up as and when they are required. "If there are no onscreen autopsies then Doctor Walid isn't going to be foregrounded," he notes, expressing admiration for artist Lee Sullivan's depiction of his much-loved characters. "The first thing you have to accept when writing comics is that the art is stylised. Lee isn't aiming for photo-realism; he likes his characters tall, thin and gaunt. Peter, Nightingale and Guleed don't look exactly how I would have drawn them; they actually look much better than that!"

According to Aaronovitch, he and Cartmel have always been determined to embark upon an original tale rather than adapt an existing novel. "It's a very different medium to prose, and there are things you can do in comics that you can't do in books, such as visual gags and strategically placed splash pages," he reasons. "So instead of fighting the medium, we thought it would be better, and crucially more fun, to play to the medium's strengths."

Rivers Of London: Body Work #1 is published on 15 July.

DON'T QUOTE ME

"I watch it for historic reasons, to try to understand what this world was based on before I got here..."

We're not sure Snoop Dogg realises *Game Of Thrones* is fantasy.

SCI-FACT!

The next novel in the *Rivers Of London* series, *The Hanging Tree*, is released in November.



SCI-FACT!
A feature-length documentary
about Michael Moorcock is
due for release in 2016.

DOMINION

Avenging Angels

Legion mythology continues as the Chosen One matures

● Who knew that Scott Stewart's film *Legion* would come back with a vengeance on the small screen? The show's first season, set 25 years after the film, revealed the story of Alex Lannen (Christopher Egan), who is destined to become the saviour of mankind as warring archangel brothers Michael (Tom Wisdom) and Gabriel (Carl Beukes) grapple for power.

Expanded to 13 episodes, season two opens a few months after Alex's climb to Gabriel's aerie. Showrunner Vaun Wilmott promises that scene will pay off in unexpected ways. "Alex will be very driven and active," Wilmott says. "By the end he will be a much more seasoned leader that sees beyond himself, like his desire to protect Claire and their unborn baby."

"We are packing in so much story," Wilmott enthuses. "It is a much bigger season and a much bigger show. We continue in Vega but we've expanded into Mallory and New Delphi."

However, Vega is still a hot bed of drama as Claire takes over the city's leadership. And where is Michael in all of this? "Alone and an outcast," Wilmott says. "Season two is about him finding his way again through Alex."

Dominion season two starts on 15 July on Syfy.



"Do your woodland walks always involve heavy weaponry?"

© LINDA STEELE

THE WHISPERING SWARM

Going Home

Michael Moorcock explains why his new work draws on his past

IT MAY CONTAIN PLENTY OF elements drawn directly from the author's own early life in London, but Michael Moorcock's new book, *The Whispering Swarm*, isn't an autobiography. Rather, Moorcock tells Red Alert, it's both a "mix of true fiction and fictitious truth", the first part of a trilogy and a book planned to be "difficult technically" as a way to keep its ever-restless creator from getting bored.

"The sequence is about the nature of perception, I suppose," he says. "About fantasy and my own life. About self-deception and ego. Taking disparate genres and seeing what can be made to work from them – or not!"

For all that sections of the book take place in a fantastic realm, the sanctuary of Alsacia, it's a book steeped in the stories that swirl around London. It's tempting to think it's no coincidence that, having lived as an émigré in Texas and Paris in recent years, Moorcock is considering returning home.

"These are the years of looking back and taking assessment," says a man who turned 75 last year. "I very much want to have a home in England again."

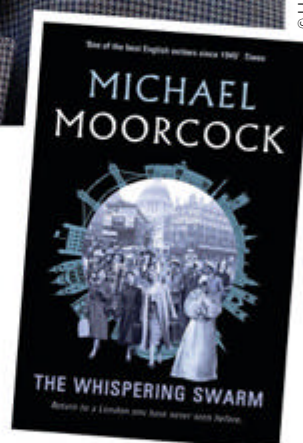
Ahead of any move, which may or may not happen, Moorcock continues to be far busier than the long gap between his last original novel, the final offering in the *Pyat* sequence (*The Vengeance*

Of Rome, 2006), and the new book suggests. For a start, he's working on two sequels to *The Whispering Swarm*. "The next part has a different biography – which is true? – and will be very exotic," Moorcock says. Expect it to be set partly in Paris and the Maghreb. The third volume will again be set largely in London.

He's also been busy working on a new album, *Live From The Terminal Café*, with his friend Martin Stone, a near-legendary "bookscout" whose musical CV includes a stint in cult 1960s band The Action. ("People like it so far.") *Elric* has been optioned for TV; there have been various comics projects, including a forthcoming "graphic novel about Rasputin and a she-bear with [French illustrator] Robin Recht"; he's happy that Gollancz is reissuing so many of his novels in a uniform edition.

Taken together, Moorcock says, this activity feels like it constitutes "a new phase" in his odyssey. "I did say that when I got to 65 I'd retire," he deadpans. "I didn't mean that, of course, but I have been trying to diversify a bit."

The Whispering Swarm: Book One Of The Sanctuary Of The White Friars is published on Thursday 16 July.



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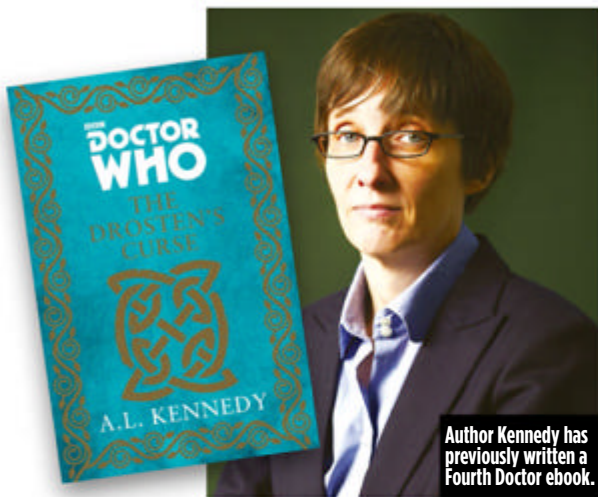
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DOCTOR WHO

Curse Practitioner

Literary star AL Kennedy on her *Doctor Who* novel



Author Kennedy has previously written a Fourth Doctor ebook.

“I didn’t grow up reading literary fiction, I grew up watching *Doctor Who*,” says AL Kennedy. The award-winning novelist and stand-up comedian has just penned *The Drosten’s Curse*, a new adventure for Tom Baker’s Doctor. “My agent knew that it was possible to write adult *Doctor Who* books, but we’d always get a reply going, ‘No, you’ll kill everybody!’”

Indeed, before now Kennedy’s reputation had mainly been for powerful novels like *The Blue Book* and works of journalism such as *On Bullfighting*. *The Drosten’s Curse* in contrast is bright and funny, though shot through with darker undercurrents.

The chance finally came on the Doctor’s 50th anniversary when she wrote a *Who* ebook – *The Death Pit*. “The treatment was miles longer. I said, ‘Well I could write the whole thing if you want...’ and they finally let me.”

So why the Fourth Doctor? “He’s the one I grew up with. The others were fine, but as soon as Baker came in, it was like your grooviest teacher turning up. And he did it for so long, it made sense to plug into that.”

Indeed, the book fits neatly into the tone of the era. “That’s why you’ve got a character with [Douglas Adams’s] pen name, David Agnew. I wanted to combine the two greatest things in the universe: *Doctor Who* and Douglas Adams!”

It’s clear that the Doctor means a lot to Kennedy. “There’s a story Tom tells about a grown up coming up to him and saying that he’d had a terrible childhood, but the Doctor had been there for him. That’s a big deal. And working with the BBC, it wasn’t about telly or money, it was about people thinking ‘this is a good thing in the world for children’. That’s the bottom line.”

The Drosten’s Curse is published on 16 July.

AERIAL ASSAULT SF TV ROUND UP



CASTING CALL

► *Community*’s Joel McHale (above) to guest-star in Fox’s **X-FILES** miniseries as Tad O’Malley – a news network anchor who becomes a Mulder ally.

► *New Girl*’s Max Greenfield checks into **AMERICAN HORROR STORY: HOTEL**, but according to showrunner Ryan Murphy, won’t check out.

► Greg Grunberg’s psychic cop Matt Parkman to guest star in **HEROES: REBORN**.

► **ASH VS EVIL DEAD** adds Mimi Rogers as a mother reunited with her family after an accident.

► Stephen King adap **11/22/63** enlists *The Good Wife*’s TR Knight as dangerous salesman Johnny Clayton.

► **AGENTS OF SHIELD** promotes Luke Mitchell’s electric Inhuman Lincoln to series regular for season three.

► *Sherlock*’s Tom Brooke cast as observing angel Fiore in Seth Rogen’s **PREACHER** pilot, which recently began filming.

► Harry Shearer – voice of Mr Burns, Ned Flanders and many other characters – quits **THE SIMPSONS** after more than 25 years.

“I had to fax something to him. So I made this big hand-drawn cover page that said Fax von Sydow... I don’t think he thought that was funny.”

Max von Sydow isn’t an easy man to please, according to JJ Abrams.

SCI-FACT!

Spoiler: Jason Aaron’s *Star Wars* comic recently revealed that Han Solo is married!

STAR WATCH

Where there’s Snoke...



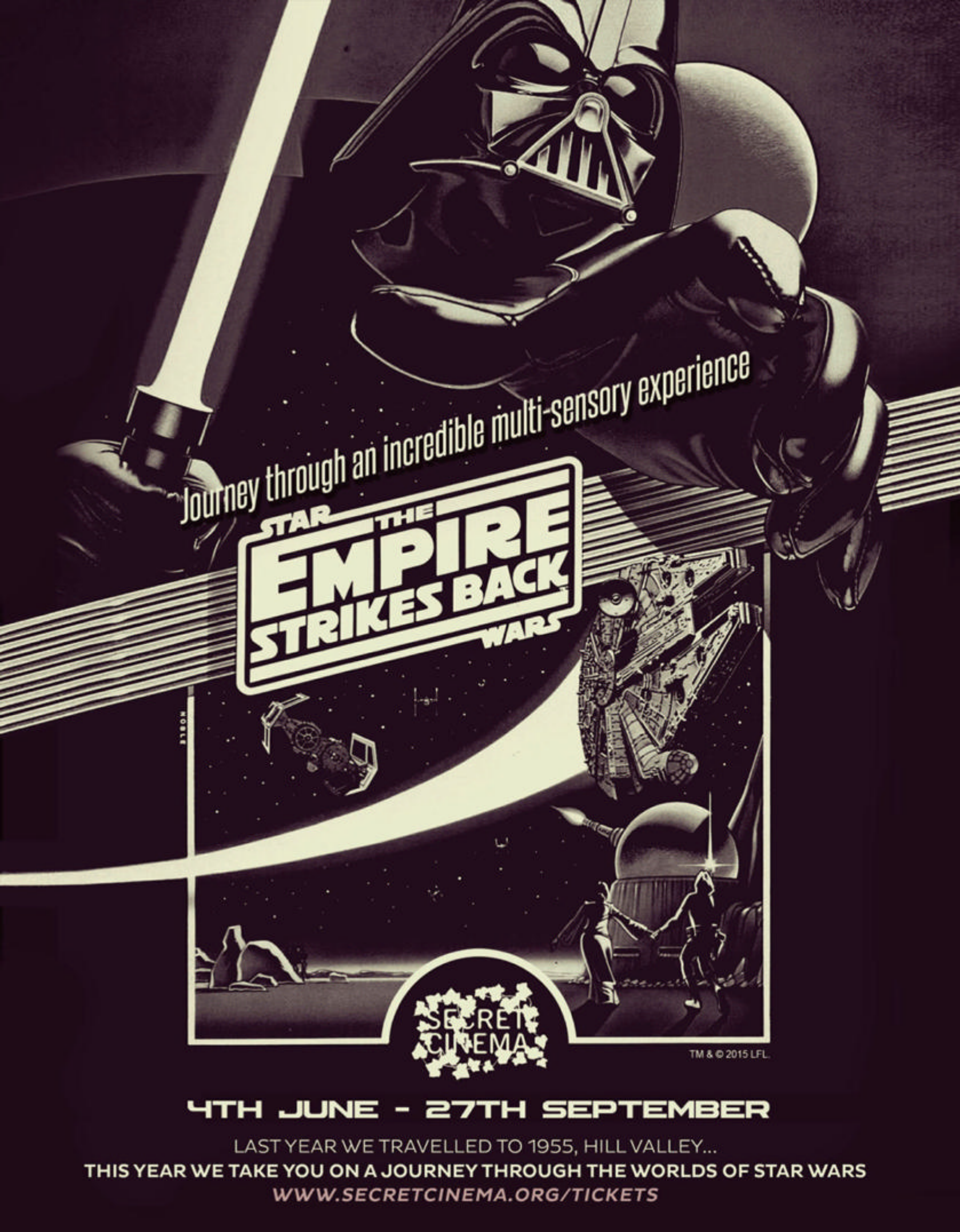
THE ANNIE LEIBOVITZ *Vanity Fair* magazine photo shoot that revealed Adam Driver is playing three-pronged lightsaber wielder Kylo Ren and Gwendoline Christie is silver Stormtrooper Captain Phasma has delivered more key intel on *The Force Awakens*. Turns out Andy Serkis (the owner of the voice that told us “there has been an awakening” in the first *Episode VII* trailer) is playing Supreme Leader Snoke – and that (unsurprisingly) it’s a performance capture role. We reckon he’s a high-up (possibly the highest-up) in the First Order that’s replaced the Empire, and that he’s either an alien, or a human whose body has been through a lot. Also, could the lack of performance capture dots on his legs mean his lower limbs will be mechanical?

In another *Vanity Fair* scoop – we can only assume they’ve already got their hands on those elusive Death Star plans as well – *Force Awakens* writer (and *The Empire Strikes Back* vet) Lawrence Kasdan has divulged that he and JJ Abrams are doing everything they can to keep the runtime lean. “One of the things that we always refocus on from the get-go was that it not be one of these very long, bloated blockbusters,” he said. “A lot of very entertaining movies lately are too long. In the last 20 minutes, you think, ‘Why isn’t this over?’ We didn’t want to make a movie like that. I mean, we were really aiming to have it be when it’s over you’ll say, ‘I wish there’s more.’”

And it looks like 007 himself may have made a detour to a galaxy far, far away. Asked whether he was making an appearance in *The Force Awakens* at *Man Up*’s London premiere, professional *Star Wars* fan Simon Pegg let slip, “I wasn’t a Stormtrooper. Daniel Craig, he was a Stormtrooper,” before adding: “I shouldn’t have said that.” With Harrison Ford already in the movie, this is possibly the closest we’ll get to a *Cowboys & Aliens* sequel...

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TOY STORY

1 You'd be hard-pressed to find a desk in *SFX* Towers that isn't adorned with action figures, but photographer Daniel Picard has taken that love for sci-fi collectables one step further with *Figure Fantasy*. The photo book presents a range of Sideshow Collectable figurines in unlikely everyday scenarios, from Superman and Batman doing graffiti to Darth Vader taking a whiz, with Picard using some nifty scale trickery to put his miniature models in real-world environments. It's available now, with a foreword from Simon Pegg.



IMAGE BANK

Witness! Witness these shiny and chrome SF pics



GAME OVER

2 *The Hunger Games* may have tarnished its otherwise exceptional track record by unnecessarily chopping the final part of the tale in half, but that doesn't mean we're any less excited for finale *Mockingjay - Part Two*. The latest poster plays on the propo-inspired marketing for *Mockingjay - Part One* to striking effect, with Katniss and the freedom fighters of District 13 finally ready to take the fight to the Capitol. Have that President Snow, you jerk! *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part Two* is released on 20 November.



BLUE MOON

3 It's more than 40 years since Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin's beloved space mice were last on the air, but the whistles and blue string soup are back on CBBC *right now* in the revived *Clangers*. The new series is narrated by Michael Palin

and has been made in the spirit of the original, using stopmotion animation and hand-knitted characters that embrace the show's more surreal aspects. Mother, Granny and Tiny are pictured, but expect to see Small, Major, the Soup Dragon, the Iron Chicken and the Froglets return too.



SCI-FACT!
Producer Jon Peters told Kevin Smith his screenplay couldn't include Superman's iconic costume or flying.

AFTERLIFE #105

Ronny Cox

Dick Jones in *RoboCop*



RONNY COX MADE HIS BIG-screen debut in *Deliverance* as the nice guy who duelled with a banjo-plucking local. Some 15 years later he bagged the role of one of the '80s great villains as *RoboCop*'s evil corporate monster Dick Jones, the Senior President of OCP who was unceremoniously fired – then obliterated – at the end of the film. “Hollywood had typecast me as a boy scout kind of guy,” he tells Red Alert, “so when I got to play Dick Jones it all of a sudden opened up whole new systems for me – I much prefer playing bad guys!” Cox later reunited with *RoboCop* director Paul Verhoeven on *Total Recall*, and now tours extensively as a musician (see www.ronnycox.com for info and videos). He will soon be seen opposite Michael Douglas in *Beyond The Reach*, released on 31 July.

IF DICK JONES HADN'T DIED, WOULD YOU HAVE WANTED TO RETURN TO THE ROLE?

It was funny. When they were going to make *RoboCop 2*, the producers called me up. I don't know how serious they were, but they said, “Ronny, we're going to make *RoboCop 2*.” I said, “Yeah, I died.” They said, “They put *RoboCop* back together, how would you feel about playing RoboVillain?” So they were thinking about reconstituting Dick Jones and having him be robotic too.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH WAS REAL IN *ROBOCOP*?

It's a cautionary tale for us all. You look around at how militarised our police forces are and how this corporate world is running everything – I think it presages the future pretty darn well.

DID YOU GET ANY SOUVENIRS FROM THE SET?

Actually I did. The scene at the end when they shoot Dick Jones and he goes out of the window, they actually set up this incredible shot and it ended up not working. They made a little dummy of me, an absolute replica with the three-piece grey suit. It looked exactly like me. It was only about I think 18 or 20 inches high, and they built the building that scale. Unfortunately it didn't work, but they gave the dummy to me. It was kind of freaky to have a little Ronny – I have a maid and she wouldn't even go in the room where I kept it because she thought it was haunted!

WHAT WOULD IT SAY ON DICK JONES' GRAVESTONE?

“I was right!”

THE DEATH OF SUPERMAN LIVES: WHAT HAPPENED?

CSI: Krypton

Jon Schnepf performs a movie autopsy on Tim Burton's *Superman Lives*

SUPERMAN LIVES – THE film that never was, due to be directed by Tim Burton, produced by Jon Peters, and starring Nicolas Cage as the Man of Steel – might have redefined Superman for a generation. It might have been a turkey. We'll never know as production was cancelled three weeks before cameras were due to start rolling. Now Jon Schnepf, director of the *Metalocalypse* cartoon, has turned movie archaeologist with his documentary *The Death Of Superman Lives: What Happened?*

Schnepf funded his cinematic excavations through a Kickstarter campaign and set about tracking down people who had worked on the project, including production designer Rick Heinrichs and costume designer Colleen Atwood, all the while aiming for the big names. “I thought I would be able to make the film in eight months, which was highly stupid of me,” he says. “This is just not possible with documentaries. The first year was mainly interviews with just a few artists who had worked peripherally on the production. It was very hard to get in contact with Tim Burton, with Kevin Smith [who wrote the first draft of the screenplay], it was particularly hard to get

in contact with Jon Peters, any of the main, big people. You just can't cold-call them.”

Finally one of Burton's team replied, saying the director was interested, but very busy for several months. How long could Schnepf wait? “I said, I can wait forever,” says Schnepf, whose persistence was rewarded with both an interview and access to Burton's archive of production art. “It was like opening the door to the *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* tomb,” he says. “Just an incredible array of artwork that no one has ever seen. It's beautiful and eye-opening and transformative. That's when I felt, ‘Wow, I really have a film here that will be worth seeing.’”

While Nicolas Cage declined an interview, Schnepf now had access to 45 minutes of test footage featuring Cage trying out different costumes. “It was the most incredible fly-on-the-wall experience because you're there in 1997 and 1998 while they are talking about making *Superman*,” says Schnepf. “We have him in the film talking about Superman as Superman and as Clark Kent. To me it was the holy grail of footage.” **SFX**

The Death Of Superman Lives: What Happened? comes to VOD on 9 July.



NICK SETCHFIELD'S DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

BLURRED LINES! THE FLASH

► *The Lego Movie*'s **Phil Lord** is reuniting with writing/directing partner **Chris Miller** on the film version of DC's scarlet speedster. "We're trying to break a story," he tells *Hippojuice*. "It's interesting, because there's a really popular TV show out there, and we're trying to carve out space for the movie that's apart from that." Lord confirms that **Ezra Miller** will play Silver Age Flash Barry Allen and not his successor Wally West. "We're more trying to stick with the cinematic universe... it really is its own thing, and kind of a standalone movie."

We're just trying to think of the best story. It's kind of a different take on superhero stuff." Lord and Miller are also handling an entirely animated Spider-Man movie for Sony. "We're sort of juggling superheroes with the colour red in them. We're trying not to confuse their powers or anything, but it does get tricky. But it's the same thing – is there a way to do one of these movies in a new way?"

HERE'S JONNY! JONNY QUEST

► *Sin City* and *Spy Kids* supremo **Robert Rodriguez** is bringing Hanna-Barbera's *Jonny Quest* to

the big screen. The cult '60s 'toon gave us the globe-hopping adventures of Jonny, son of boffin Dr Benton Quest, a man who routinely embroiled his offspring in perilous capers involving dinosaurs, jaguars, robot spiders, Egyptian mummies and komodo dragons (and that was just the title sequence). Some responsible parenting skills, right there. It's a project that's sizzled in the merciless flames of Development Hell for over 20 years – at one point it was a star vehicle for **Zac Efron**. Now Rodriguez is writing this live-action take with *Pirates Of The Caribbean* scribe **Terry Rossio**.

Keep the groovy theme tune, guys, or we're coming for your heads.

VICTORIAN VALUES! THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN

► Twentieth Century Fox is rebooting *The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. And yes, the global demand for this is roughly on a par with cries for the return of Hear'Say and dial-up internet but it's happening. **Stephen Norrington** brought **Alan Moore** and **Kevin O'Neill**'s graphic novel series to the screen in 2003 – it's the last film he

A MONSTROUS IDEA! COLOSSAL

► **Anne Hathaway** may be looking for love in all the wrong places – in this case the rubble-strewn remains of Tokyo, scene of a devastating assault by a giant lizard. That's the premise of *Colossal*, the tale of a jobless New Yorker who realises she has a unique connection with a city-trashing monster and heads to Japan to discover how she's psychically linked to the carnage. *Timecrimes* helmer **Nacho Vigalando** is behind this one. "*Colossal* is my most ambitious script so far, and probably also the most personal one," he says. "Having Anne and this terrific team around goes beyond my craziest expectations." Only one large, scaly snag: no sooner was the project announced than Toho Studios, rights holders of Godzilla, filed a lawsuit against Voltage Pictures, claiming "blatant infringement of another's intellectual property." Look for this one to be settled in court. Or, ideally, in a brutal creature-on-creature smackdown on Monster Island.

directed and also the final entry on star **Sean Connery's** resume. Coincidence or curse? You decide. Fox considered mining the property for TV in 2013 but now aims for a big-screen redo. The steampunk-flavoured saga unites iconic characters of Victorian fantasy from Allan Quartermain to Captain Nemo, the Invisible Man to Mr Hyde, mashing them together into a grand pulpy stew, liberally seasoned with literary in-jokes (say, is that Octavia Twelveteeths from 1872's *The Unspeakable Misery At Mouse Hall* by Sir Gladwyn Truss-Botherer? It surely is!). **John Davis** produces.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD! THE LEGEND OF CONAN

► Word reaches us from the distant Hyborian Age, brought across the blood-dark, serpent-infested seas on Cimmerian spice ships [switches off "Instant Robert E Howard prose generator"]. **Arnold Schwarzenegger** will return to loincloth duty in a sequel that fits seamlessly with John Milius' savage, none-more-macho original. "Our tone is a logical extension of the character established in the '82 film, but 30 years later," says producer/co-writer **Chris Morgan**. "Think *Unforgiven*... with a sword-wielding barbarian." And blood will flow. "To Conan it's not about fancy sword moves; it's about the fastest and most effective way of disposing of your enemy." Aye, the sullen-eyed reaver shall reclaim his kingdom by might of sinew and bone [damn, thought we'd switched that thing off].

X-PANSION PACK! NEW MUTANTS

► Brand X is expanding. Not content with establishing a multi-generational franchise in the

X-Men movies, Twentieth Century Fox is now mining another of Marvel's mutant titles for potential box office. Launched at the height of the comic book X-craze of the early '80s, *New Mutants* was a spin-off that focused on the next generation of heroes: Wolfsbane, Karma, Sunspot, Cannonball and Danielle Moonstar. They'll be brought to the screen by *The Fault In Our Stars* helmer **Josh Boone**. "We're so excited to explore this new part of the X-Men universe, and so excited to do it with Josh, who is uniquely suited to tell this story about young characters," says producer **Simon Kinberg**. Expect a teen-friendlier take, mixing mutant DNA with slamming bedroom doors and Clearasil.

DESTINATION: CYBERTRON! TRANSFORMERS ONE

► For years scientists have warned of the Singularity, the chilling moment technology attains sentience and claims our world for its own. A rather more pressing threat may be the Transformation, the moment Paramount's robot franchise seizes every cinema on the planet and crushes humanity beneath the weight of pure, eyeball-smashing Michael Bayhem. As the studio continues to plot an onslaught of sequels, prequels and spin-offs, word is that one of the notions in the mix is an origin story for home planet Cybertron while another potential flick is a solo adventure for Bumblebee. Paramount's Transformers-focused think tank includes *The Walking Dead's* **Robert Kirkman**, *X-Men 2's* **Zak Penn** and *Fringe's* **Jeff Pinker**. Note: the small print in their contracts insists they'll be allowed to endure in flesh form after the revolution. Traitorous scum.

ALSO BURNING



TILDA SWINTON rumoured to be playing the Ancient One in *Doctor Strange*... **LUC BESSON** adapting classic French SF strip *Valerian*... **SAOIRSE RONAN** and **DAKOTA FANNING** orbiting the female lead in *Potter* spin-off *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*... **SAMUEL L JACKSON** joining the muthaf---ing *Blob* remake... Lionsgate turning *The Odyssey* into a franchise... Disney unplugging *Tron 3*... **CHRIS PINE** rumoured for the role of Steve Trevor in *Wonder Woman*... **MICHAEL ROOKER** joining horror *The Belko Experiment*... **ALICIA VIKANDER** in talks for the female lead in *Assassin's Creed*... **REESE WITHERSPOON** playing Tinkerbell in *Peter Pan* spin-off *Tink*... **ANDREA RISEBOROUGH** in talks to play the villain in *The Crow*... *Skyfall's* **ROGER DEAKINS** handling the cinematography on *Blade Runner 2*... **VIVICA A FOX** returning for *Independence Day 2*... *Neuromancer* movie still alive... **GEORGE MILLER** considering *Mad Max: The Wasteland* as a sequel title... **KRISTEN STEWART** joining ghost story *Personal Shopper*... **KATE BECKINSALE** returning for a fifth *Underworld*... Next *Apes* movie rumoured to be titled *War Of The Planet Of The Apes*... Sony planning a remake of *The Craft*... **DWAYNE JOHNSON** starring in remake of *Big Trouble In Little China*... **ANDRE TRICOTEUX** playing X-Man Colossus in *Deadpool*... *Daredevil's* **MARCO RAMIREZ** writing the live action *Akira* for Warner Bros...

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BRIAN ALDISS

The legendary SF author looks back at his long career

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Throne Up

Fantasy is still getting an unfair press, says David Langford



► SF writer David Langford has had a column in *SFX* since issue one.
 ► David has received 29 Hugo Awards throughout his career.
 ► His celebrated SF newsletter can be found at <http://news.ansible.co.uk>.
 ► He is a principal editor of the SF Encyclopedia at <http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com>.

What the papers say: "If you haven't seen any

of *Game Of Thrones* so far, you might be wondering if it's worth ploughing through 40 hours of fantasy hokum to get you up to speed. It certainly looks, at first glance, like a load of old nonsense comprising bare breasts, fighting, dragons and not much else." (*Telegraph*) Very familiar – but it's the teaser for a rave review.

The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* also loves *Game Of Thrones*, but wants it kept separate from that greasy Tolkien stuff. *GoT*, they say (in German), is "often erroneously regarded as fantasy, although there are neither magic rings here nor a fantastical triumph of good over evil."

Meanwhile, US TV host Joe Scarborough explains *GoT* without the prejudice installed by watching it: "I think there are, like, gnomes, and elves, and hobbits, and people with spikes coming out of the sides of their faces." (MSNBC)

Yes, genre fiction still gets a bad press. When a *Guardian* hack wants to sneer at PUA (pick-up artist) culture, it's instant guilt by association: "They're sci-fi saddos; they're World Of Warcraft weirdos."

The *Weekly Standard* tackles unashamed SF hack Jules Verne: "And, of course, for those who still feel obliged to read something semi-respectable but prefer not to trouble themselves with heavy lifting, there is science fiction..."

A more upmarket pundit admits SF may be likeable but gives it the thumbs-down for not being loveable: "I'm not suggesting that one can't fully enjoy James Crumley, James Lee Burke, Robert Heinlein, Philip K Dick, and Orson Scott Card, but I'm not sure one can love them in the way that one loves Shakespeare, Keats, Chekhov, and Joyce. One can be a fan of Agatha Christie, but one can't really be a fan of George Eliot."



It's instant guilt by association: "They're sci-fi saddos"

Genre-watchers enjoyed the uproar when literary author Kazuo Ishiguro published his f*nt*sy novel *The Buried Giant*, and worried in public about the ghastly stigma: "Will readers follow me into this? Will they understand what I'm trying to do? Are they going to say this is fantasy?" (*NY Times*) Ursula K Le Guin delivered a smart ticking-off: "Well, yes, they probably will. Why not? It appears that the author takes the word for an insult." (Bookviewcafe.com). No, no, Ishiguro retorted: Le Guin is "entitled to like my book or not

(*Chronicle Of Higher Education*) I remember Kipling wrote a whole story about Jane Austen fandom...

This review of Michael Faber's SF novel *The Book Of Strange New Things* explains its main saving grace: "While the bulk of the book takes place on another planet – a vividly drawn environment with green water, no moon and frequent, spiralling rainstorms – it doesn't read like science fiction, or like any genre." (*NY Times*) What a relief.

Even *Godzilla* is no longer popcorn-fed fun: "Appreciation of a movie like this requires an almost morbid degree of connoisseurship, which may, in practice, be hard to distinguish from bored acquiescence." (*NY Times*)

like my book, but as far as I am concerned, she's got the wrong person. I am on the side of the pixies and the dragons." (*Guardian*)

Mainstream pixie David Mitchell chimed in: "Fantasy plus literary fiction can achieve things that frank blank realism can't," said Mr Mitchell, who added that he hoped *The Buried Giant* would help to 'de-stigmatize' fantasy. 'Bending the laws of what we call reality in a novel doesn't necessarily lead to elves saying "Make haste! These woods will be swarming with orcs by nightfall."' (NY Times) As bad as that genre hack Shakespeare whose fairies spout stuff like: "I'll met by moonlight, proud Titania." (SFX)

David Langford has long studied the Enemy.

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Loving Lucifer

The devil's a right charmer, reckons Bonnie Burton

The good guys always win (or at least we hope so), but it's the bad guys who look like they're having the most fun. Just look at Lucifer. According to the Christian Bible, Lucifer — also referred to as Morning Star — was originally God's favourite angel. But once he fell from heaven after refusing to bow down to Adam, he was demoted to running hell. Personally, I think he was promoted. We all know that real partiers never make it through the pearly gates.

So when Lucifer shows up in TV, movies and comics, it's not surprising that he's depicted as the guy who knows how to have a good time. Also known as the devil or Satan, he's been leading humans astray since that whole snake-apple-Eve incident.

Really desperate humans would go to the crossroads asking the devil for the kind of favours that only a soul would pay for. Sign in blood on the dotted line and the wish is granted. Just make sure you're very specific and willing to head straight to the fiery new home when your time is finally up.

In the original *Bedazzled*, the devil is played expertly by Peter Cook. An unhappy man agrees to swap his soul for seven wishes granted by the devil, but there's a catch. With each wish, the devil figures out a way to sabotage the outcome thanks to loopholes and non-specific wording. Serves that human right for treating the devil like an evil genie.

In TV's *Reaper*, Ray Wise plays the kind of Satan who would have had fun drinking cocktails with the Rat Pack in old school Las Vegas. Wise's Satan wears nice suits, is a smooth talker and downright debonair. He clearly enjoys his work getting naive humans to sign on the dotted line.

The devil is always depicted in pop culture as the well-dressed cool cat who can't be bothered with rules, loves to piss off angels and has a blast messing with mere mortals. Whether he's Tim Curry playing the devil in love in *Legend* or



Viggo Mortensen as Lucifer in *The Prophecy*, it's clear that the Dark Lord of the Underworld has a certain razzmatazz when it comes to his work. He loves what he does and has fun doing it.

So why am I drawn to the ultimate bad boy? It's not the fancy suits — though actor Peter Stormare looked ironically classy in an all-white suit as Lucifer in *Constantine*. It's not even Lucifer's superpowers — which include shape-shifting, changing the weather and superhuman strength.

I suppose what I love about Satan is the fact that he knows when you're lying and even when you let your desires take over your better judgment. You can't sweet-talk Satan. He either likes you or he doesn't. He might lie and seduce you into the worst decisions ever. But when



Our columnist Bonnie Burton, a San Francisco-based author, has written a number of books including her latest — *The Star Wars Craft Book*.
Bonnie appears on the massive "Geek & Sundry" and "Stan Lee's World Of Heroes" YouTube channels.
More of her writing can be found at www.grrl.com.

You've got the best example of worst boyfriend material ever

you're with him, you know immediately that the outcome will involve eternal flames.

When attracted to bad boys, you know that the relationship isn't fuelled by Cupid's arrows, Valentine's cards and flowers. You're a moth, and they're the flame. And we all know how that love story ends.

Lucifer fits that description perfectly. Add endless charm and the ability to make sin look sexy, and you've got the best example of worst boyfriend material ever. And that's why he's depicted more as a hot bad boy on a motorbike, not the creepy red dude with a goatee and hooves.

Maybe movie studios would rather turn Satan into a sex machine instead of a CGI monster so we keep coming back for more. When the King of the Underworld can double as a model for underwear, you have to wonder if God has a chance to get the same kind of makeover.

But even with Jesus looking like the front man of every grunge band I've ever loved, I still gravitate toward Lucifer. I suppose I find a guy full of bad ideas much more exciting than a lad who always plays by the rules. I might end up in hell, but I bet I won't be bored. 

Bonnie reckons God looks like everyone's angry grandfather or a judgmental Gandalf.

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Rich

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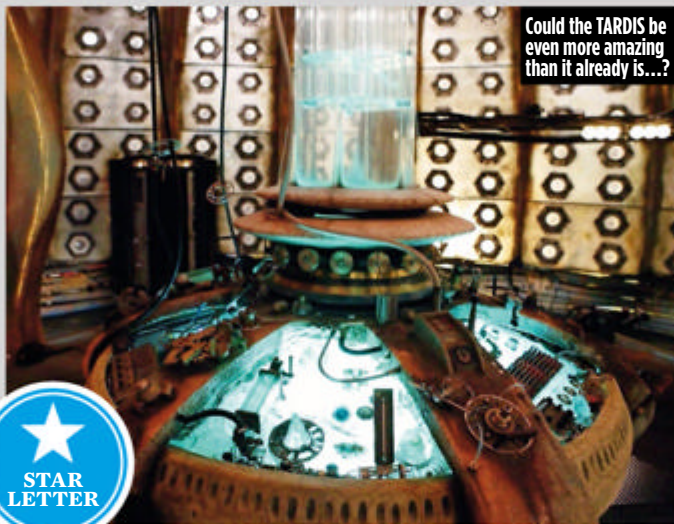
Richard Edwards, Editor

It's a good job we're always happy to talk superhero here at SFX Towers – spandex-clad titans in one form or another didn't leave much space for anything else in the mailbox this month. Luckily, we've also squeezed in some chat about multiverses, book reviews and *The Walking Dead*.

WRITE IN AND WIN!



We know you don't need payment to write in. In fact, we're sure many of you believe the very prospect of remuneration cheapens the whole endeavour. Even so, we like to give a little something back to reward you for sharing your thoughts. That's why Simon Hood, writer of this month's Star Letter, will find his bookshelf enhanced to the tune of the latest instalment of the *Horus Heresy* series. Written by Nick Kyme, *Deathfire* focuses on the Salamander Legion as they return their Primarch's body to their home world. It's available to buy for £25 from www.blacklibrary.com and www.games-workshop.com.



ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE

I'd like to apply a scientific theory to *Doctor Who*; specifically, the one that posits our universe as one of an infinite number of variations. This could be the answer to *Doctor Who*'s vast history of contradictions, such as the UNIT chronology nightmare. Being as, according to this so-called Many Worlds Theory, anything that can happen, does happen, the only explanation I can conclude from the Doctor's travels is that the TARDIS is capable of travelling the whole multiverse. Perhaps in one universe, Sarah Jane came from 1980, but not in another.

We accept that the TARDIS can travel in time and space, so would it be such a giant leap for it to be able to sort of "slide" across into multiple realities as well, just as they did in that Jerry O'Connell series in the '90s (the title eludes me...).

Apart from being a neat continuity get-out clause, the

"The multiverse could be the answer to *Doctor Who*'s vast history of contradictions"

multiverse theory could also open up new possibilities, such as alternative past incarnations of the Doctor, or known versions of the Doctor that regenerated much later – then we could have classic Doctors back and it wouldn't even matter that they now appear to be much older.

Simon Hood, Selby

▶ The Doctor has visited parallel worlds before (in "The Age Of Steel" for starters) but you have thought about this a lot, so have a book as reward for your efforts.

THIS COULD BE YOU! EMAIL [SFX@FUTURENET.COM](mailto:sfx@futurenet.com)



HOT TOPIC WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING

FORWARD TO IN THE NEW US TV SEASON?

Legends Of Tomorrow looks suitably bigger than *Arrow* or *The Flash*, though I do question the choice of characters. I know it is more of a utility thing, since new characters require conceptualisation and the casting of fresh faces, but taking all our favourite background characters and throwing them together smacks of laziness. It's brilliant laziness, because Brandon Routh's Iron Man has been a delight throughout season three of *Arrow*. But resurrecting Sara Lance as the "White Canary" guts her exit from the universe. It's like they brought her back just to pad out the numbers with an actress they liked working with.

Supergirl looks fun, but I am reserving final judgment until the first episode premieres here in the UK. Though one female-led superhero series I am especially stoked for is AKA *Jessica Jones*. After devouring *Daredevil*, my faith in the Marvel-ABC-Netflix production tag team has solidified into obsidian. And next year we get *Luke Cage*, *Iron Fist* and *Daredevil* season two!

Alex Edwards, email

Supergirl looks absolutely awful. The music and dialogue in the trailer make it look like a dodgy '80s sitcom.

Phil Wilson, Facebook

Minority Report looks amazing. *Legends Of Tomorrow* should be fun. *Sam F'kin Cooper, Facebook*

More of *The Flash* and *Arrow*, and AKA *Jessica Jones* on Netflix.

Gary Pratt, Facebook

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We just hope there's a cameo role for Helen Slater in there somewhere...

I'm still in mourning over *The Following* being cancelled but I'm hoping *Minority Report* will fill the void!

Jenny Davies, Facebook

Supergirl looks like it was literally made for American teenage girls after seeing the 10-minute promos. It was *Sex And The City* with every cliché in the book.

Minority Report could go either way, but with *Almost Human* being fantastic and getting canned after one season I'm wondering what a sci-fi series has to do to get a second season.

Andy Hall, Facebook

There's no point bothering, they'll all get axed after a season, good or not.

Eddie Fowler, Facebook

▶ Anyone else noticed that almost every new US genre show is based on an existing movie or TV property? Looks like the networks are hedging their bets on recognisable franchises – will that be enough to stop them becoming one-season wonders?

FULLY BOOKED

I am a massive fan of *SFX* and regularly find a film or TV show I might have missed if not for the coverage it received in your venerable pages. Alas the same cannot be said when it comes to the books. I turn the page expecting more reviews and it's already the comics turn. Don't get

me wrong, I do like the reviews you do and I may never have found *The Troop* or *Birdbox* without your help, but it's not enough. A couple more book review pages with a few more options would go down a treat. I will always love you, though, and HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Gary Renton, A Scotsman in Dublin

▶ While it's obviously a good thing that there's so many great SF and fantasy books being published every month, the flipside of that is that we can't review every book we'd like to – we just don't have the space. We still cover loads every month, though, and all our reviews are written by genre experts.

TALES OF WAR FROM THE GRIM DARKNESS OF THE FAR FUTURE
blacklibrary.com



LETTERS

"Supergirl/looks absolutely awful, like a dodgy '80s sitcom"

LEVELLING THE LAND

I enjoyed *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*. The dialogue was fun and snappy, the action was great, and I liked the way the innocent were protected during the climactic carnage. I also liked the way that *Agents Of SHIELD*'s Theta Protocol was a tie-in to the film. It did get me thinking though, how many cities have we now seen destroyed on the big screen? Is this a recent trend which began in spectacular style with *Independence Day* in 1996? Is the city-wide destruction now getting old, with audiences not as amazed by widespread CGI carnage as they once were?

Keith Tudor, Romsey

▶ I don't think it's a new thing at all, Keith – what about all the times Tokyo has been trashed by Godzilla and his ilk? It's just that CG effects have made it a hell of a lot easier to make the carnage ➔



THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

SFX 199
September 2010



5 YEARS AGO

After *Children Of Earth*, we were excited for *Miracle Day*. We ended up as glum as we had been about *Lost*'s end.

SFX 134
September 2005



10 YEARS AGO

Speaking of *Lost*, we proudly proclaimed that we'd found your new fave show, and spoke with *BSG*'s Tricia Helfer.

SFX 68
September 2000



15 YEARS AGO

Mystique, Storm and Jean Grey graced our cover, and gave us the excuse to make shameless *SFX-Men* puns.

ask the SFXperts

If you can't remember it, we can! Your sci-fi problems solved...

PORTAL COMBAT

◻ I'm looking for a film that came out in the mid-'90s. It was about men in black who were actually bad aliens who were possibly building some sort of portal to their planet. There was a young, good

alien trying to stop them with the help of a human.

Lawrence Jennings, email

GUEST SFXPERT GLEN HARRISON SAYS:

This is *The Silencers* (1996), a direct-to-video effort produced

by PM Entertainment, who churned out low budget movies throughout the '90s. Dennis Christopher plays alien cop Comdor, who teams up with a Secret Service agent to foil an invasion-via-portal. Car chases, shootouts and much property damage ensues. It was released on all-region DVD and is still available if you shop around.



Cash In The AT-AT will return next month. If you've got a piece of memorabilia you'd like us to feature, send us a photo of your item (in focus, well lit against a plain background, and at least 1,000 pixels across) to sfx@futurenet.com.

SOAPBOX

SFX WRITERS' PERSONAL RANTS

SFX Editor Richard Edwards is not in love with love saving the day



Please stick to the sciencey stuff, Mr Nolan.



I have nothing against love. It's undoubtedly a good thing. It brings a lot of happiness to the world. It's responsible for incredible acts of kindness and bravery. Yet, when used as a plot device in contemporary science fiction, love has become a contrived magical power, a lazy storytelling tool to help a writer who's backed him/herself into a corner. It's deus ex machina at its worst and it must stop.

I'm not complaining about love saving the day in fairytales like *Frozen*. Here it's a theme as old as storytelling itself, the power of "love's true kiss" being so entwined with fairytale DNA that trying to separate them would be madness. No, I have issues with love rearing its head in more science fiction environments.

Doctor Who is a prime offender. In recent years love has been victorious on numerous occasions, whether it's the restorative power of tears in "The Snowmen" or a dad showing his love for his alien sprog in "Night Terrors". Even emotionless Cybermen have now been defeated by love on two notable occasions – Craig's love for his baby son protected him from Cyberfication in "Closing Time", and both Danny Pink and the Brigadier defied their programming in "Death

In Heaven". Seriously, if the Cybermen were that susceptible to people having feelings, they'd have struggled to conquer a pub, let alone entire planets.

But for me, the worst recent "love is magic" offender is Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*. This is a film that wore its hard sci-fi credentials on the sleeve of its NASA-branded jumpsuit, with its theoretical physics advisors and technologically plausible spacecraft. But then, come the final act, we learn that

The worst recent offender is *Interstellar*

love can somehow travel faster than the speed of light and/or escape the gravitational field of a black hole, completely violating Einstein's theories of general relativity. Er, how is this "love" being transmitted across space? I'm sorry, but not even fifth dimensional superbeings make that believable – it's just magic.

For all its wonder, love is not a mystical force. It's a chemical thing that happens in the brain, so let's keep it there and think before it ruins more otherwise decent sci-fi plots.

"Agent Carter can be sold as a *Captain America* spin-off"

look good. I suspect we'll be seeing plenty more cities flattened in coming years.

THE 100 CLUB

Great of you to acknowledge *The 100* as a watchable show on your View Screen pages. It's one of my favourites at the moment. I like that the show has some great character development. The show portrays very realistically the effect that the struggle for survival has on the moral choices of the characters, and doesn't shy away from killing main protagonists.

My only bugbear with *The 100* is the scientific foundation. Everything that has to do with the effect of the radiation on Earth sounds really dodgy. When Clarke makes the comment that the Sky People are genetically engineered it seems as if the writers just put that in because they belatedly realised that they have to explain their radiation resistance!

Ilona Kosmowsky, email

Dodgy science in science fiction show? Surely some mistake, surely some mistake...

THE MILLER'S TALE

Happy belated birthday. Really enjoying the anniversary issue. Have to say I agree with Nick Setchfield regarding *The Dark Knight Returns*' influence over all things Batman. It's a great book, but I'd say *Year One* is better. People seem to forget that Frank Miller's other attempts at Batman, *Dark Knight Strikes Back* and *All*



Star were total rubbish. I'd love to see a Batman film closer to the style of the *Arkham* videogames, which have been brilliant.

I was also very sad to hear about the treatment of Joss Whedon on social media regarding Black Widow's story in *Age of Ultron*. When she referred to herself as a monster, I took that to be about her role as an assassin and not her inability to have children. Also, I fail to understand why her romantic storyline was seen as detrimental to the character. You can't be a kick-ass hero and have a love life?

It is a pity that we've yet to see a superhero movie with a female lead character, but I'm looking forward to *Captain Marvel*, which I hope starts to redress the balance. There's a lack of strong



Black Widow wonders if Hulk is going to sing on a Band Aid single.



Peggy Carter is set to drive into British hearts soon too – which is fitting.

women in blockbuster movies in general and not just the MCU.
Mark Howe, email

▶ I agree that it's not just the MCU that's behind on gender equality. Hollywood's reluctance to put female characters centre stage in blockbusters is inexcusable – it's like Ripley and Buffy never happened. Hopefully Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman (and, fingers crossed, Rey in *The Force Awakens*) will start to redress the balance.

GET CARTER

It seems ridiculous to me that no UK TV channel has as yet shown any interest in showing the *Agent Carter* TV series despite the growing popularity of the MCU.



Few shows have quite the firepower of *The Walking Dead*.

I really can't think why. Decent reviews and ratings in America and the show just renewed for a second season as well. *Captain America* was a big movie so surely the show can be advertised as a *Captain America* spin-off!
Robert Graham, Lincoln

▶ As you might know by now, *Agent Carter* IS coming to the UK, on Fox from 12 July. Hurrah!

LIVE FOREVER

Awesome 20th anniversary issue but with one let down. The View Screen article on *The Walking Dead* was, how do I put this, slightly doom and gloom. The fifth season has been the best yet, the Tyreese episode will be the best thing on TV in 2015. Yet you didn't focus on that. No, it was all about



what happens if... Surely it should be about how it plans to get to the 12th season, not how it won't get to that many.

If Andrew Lincoln does choose to leave would it really have such an impact? It's not like the show is called *Rick Grimes*, it's *The Walking Dead*. The show's producers have even said on the DVDs that the show is really Carl's journey so surely that would be the character that would affect the show the most.

And why wouldn't Mr Lincoln want to stay on? Look at *NCIS*, one of the most watched series in the world – the main cast have been there since the pilot on *JAG*. So people do stay on shows for 12-plus years!

Mike Garner, Moorends

▶ Two seasons of *This Life*, two seasons of *Teachers*... A sixth year is uncharted territory for Mr Lincoln, so who knows how long he'll stay in Atlanta? And let's face it, constantly running from zombies is a pretty high-pressure occupation – maybe he'll need a sabbatical.

SAFETY FIRST

I've just watched *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* with Quicksilver speeding about saving the day, I've noticed when characters have these powers they just zip about grabbing people who no doubt get injured in getting saved. A good example of super fast safety is in *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* when that movie's Quicksilver saved Magneto – he told him to hold on as he supported his neck in case of whiplash. Why the *Avengers* movie didn't do this I don't know.

Gavin Dickinson, Scotland

▶ Next you'll be asking for everyone Superman saves to be strapped into a harness before he takes off.



WAHF WE ALSO HEARD FROM

● **The Llama God** ("There's one thing that *Age Of Ultron* gets very, very wrong – the complete lack of pert bottoms"); ● **Keith Tudor** (again, catching his breath after watching the spectacular *Mad Max: Fury Road*); ● **Ann Hodnett** (whose husband spotted a similarity between a Hexenbeast in *Grimm* and Victoria Beckham); ● **Mike Garner** (again, who thinks *Grimm* has got interesting all of a sudden – presumably you're a Spice Girls fan, Mike); ● **Neil Hickman** ("Can't believe you guys reviewed the trailer for *Pixels* and didn't mention the bit from *Futurama*'s "Anthology Of Interest", which has pretty much the same plot"); ● **Robert Cassidy** ("I've been enjoying *The Flash* immensely, but it occurred to me that Star Labs is freaking enormous yet only seems to employ three people. Not even a janitor in sight"); ● **Dell Searl** ("Just watched the last episode of *Forever*, I can't believe they are not making anymore"); ● **Steve O'Brien** (formerly of this parish, who sent us a picture of an SFX numberplate – next time, send us the car too, Steve); ● **Koppite47** (wanting more costumes in *Gotham* and *Agents Of SHIELD*. "Surely Bruce Wayne can begin his evolution into Batman. Daredevil is trying it!"); ● **Mike Bridgeman** (pointing out that the "farm boy" in *Near Dark* is played by Adrian Pasdar and not Bill Paxton as we claimed in SFX 261); ● **Muhammad Maaya** (sad that he'll have to wait a whole year for the next season of *Daredevil*); ● **Kev Crossley** (it's either time travel or Photoshop – we've called in the experts and we're still not sure); ● **Drew** (wishing us a happy 20th birthday, and wishing he'd kept the first four issues of the mag from all those years ago); ● **Phil J Hill** (looking forward to the third season of *Hemlock Grove*); ● **Andy Kinnear** (I'm more worried about homegrown British sci-fi than US TV at present); and many, many more...



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH THE SCI-FI WORLD!

Write in and you'll win some books if we feature you in the star letter slot. Email us at sfx@futurenet.com or you can try Post Apocalypse, SFX, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA if you're not taken with technology.

Wishlist

Illustrating what you want to see in new SF films and television.
This Month: will DC's aquatic ace sink or swim on the big screen?

Aquaman

YOUR TOP 5 REQUESTS

Lighten Up

1 A common question asked of all DC's films and one that's no less relevant here: why so serious? "Bring some joy into DC's movies," says **Gary Pratt**. "Less Nolan style grit and darkness. Throw some green and orange into the colour of Aquaman's costume and give him some wisecracks to say as he defeats his adversaries."

Hail To The Queen

2 Black Manta and Lord Nemo were popular choices for Aquaman's Big Bad, but you'd like the film to focus, in part, on the relationship between the King of the Seven Seas and his queen. "Jessica Chastain as Mera would be awesome. Add monsters from the Trench and I'd sea it," says **David Stephen**, with some top punnage.

Underwater Action

3 Sounds obvious, but you don't want to see Aquaman fight his battles on dry land. In other words: the wetter, the better according to **Lucile Slater**. "Do something we haven't seen before and set it entirely underwater. If they do it right it could be different from anything out there."

Hook Hand

4 You'd like to see Aquaman go through a formative moment – the loss of his left hand. "I would like the whole film to be about how he gets his hook hand. Also an acknowledgement that 'Aquaman' is a terrible name for any self-respecting superhero," says **Tom Gray**.

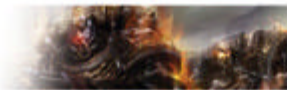
Animal Action

5 Most of all, you want plenty of Aquaman commanding the creatures of the seven seas. "If he doesn't ride a giant seahorse into battle I'll feel short changed," **Anna Heath** says.

LORD NEMO
KARL URBAN



TEMPEST
TAYLOR KITSCH



BLACK MANTA
CHIWETEL EJIOFOR

AQUAMAN
JASON MOMOA

MERA
JESSICA CHASTAIN

ARE YOU LISTENING?

Wash those ears out, Hollywood, our readers have some ideas

■ Let's see an epic battle between Aquaman and Captain Birdseye with huge fish fingers as weapons! Or is that just taking the pisces? **Keith Heeney**
■ Make Khal Drogo blond.

Ashraf Ghori

■ Aquaman sucks [lollipops? - Ed]. **Mike Clark**

■ I'm pleased that Jason's scars and tattoos are integrated into his Aquaman look. **José Sanders**

■ Give it back to Marvel and call it Sub-Mariner. **Wayne Smyth**

■ The film won't be complete without an appearance by Aqualad. Or Aquababy. Or the Aquatoaster. **Tim Nelson**

■ Monsters, badassery, Black Manta. Sorted. **Paolo Bianco**

■ Forget Momoa, I want the Vincent Chase Aquaman movie.

Andy Shaw

■ James Wan seems like a pretty good shout for director, he did a great job with *Fast & Furious 7*.

Lyndsey Perkins

■ Aquaman's mum and dad, Tom Curry and Atlanna, occupying a similar role to Odin and Frigga in the Thor movies. **Chloe Brand**

■ If Aquaman's crashing Batman and Superman's movie it's only fair that they do the same. Bat-Sub, anyone? **Scott Goodwin**

■ If Ark the Sea Lion and/or Topo don't have a CRUCIAL role to play I'll be boycotting all DC movies. **Neal Courtney**

■ Go heavy on the fantasy elements, make him DC's Thor.

Shannon Sanderson

■ Send a positive ecological message with the film. Maybe Aquaman could spend a few minutes cutting up six-pack rings that have been tossed in the sea (every little helps). **Lauren Wade**

■ He should throw a starfish at criminals and shout "You'd better stop that!"

Alex Holden Sigsworth

■ SpongeBob and Patrick handing him his arse.

Gary Slowburn

■ I'd like the tagline "The Wettest Movie You'll See This Year!" Alternatively: "Aquaman: You'll Believe A Man Can Swim!"

FlangeBadger

coming soon

Rogue One and Doctor Strange

Suggestions at the ready for the *Star Wars* Anthology film and in two months' time Benedict Cumberbatch's sorcerer supreme.



Send in your ideas about our current Wishlist by visiting bit.ly/SFXwishlist

Event Horizon

Because meeting up is every fan's right

EVENT REPORT

Doctor Who Symphonic Spectacular

25 May 2015, Motorpoint Arena, Cardiff

The latest *Doctor Who* music event showcased Murray Gold's tunes, Ian Berriman reports

Cybermen positioned and ready to kill everyone, and the orchestra kept playing. That's professionalism.

Ben Foster conducts the orchestra and chorus.



ONE HARDLY NEEDS reminding that Cardiff's now the home of *Doctor Who*, but it certainly underlines the point when you find yourself sitting three yards from Murray Gold as he happily nods along to his own tunes... The series' regular composer since 2005 was just one of hundreds present when *Who*'s latest musical extravaganza stopped off in the Welsh capital.

Thanks to the success of the *Doctor Who* Proms, Whovians are familiar with the concept of the BBC National Orchestra Of Wales performing Gold's scores live, but this long-overdue touring show made the experience accessible to fans as far north as Newcastle and Glasgow.

Over the course of several hours in Cardiff, it both revisited themes that can now be considered classics (like the accompaniment to Rose and the Tenth Doctor's blub-inducing Bad Wolf Bay bye-byes) and gave a first public airing to series eight cues (like a suite of music from "Death In Heaven"), reminding all present that Gold's compositions – by turns stirring, haunting and martial – have been a major contributor to the show's success.

Although the focus was on music from the revived series, there was still acknowledgment of the show's history, with, for example, clips of all the Doctors in a regeneration montage, and the presence of Peter Davison – who even whipped out his original Fifth Doctor coat for the finale. Acting as compere, Davison

absolutely smashed it; he's got a wry sense of humour, and his banter with conductor Ben Foster and sly digs at successor Colin Baker added an extra dimension to the evening – as did appearances by a host of *Who* monsters, with the likes of Cybermen and the Foretold stalking the aisles.

If we have one complaint it's that occasionally the music was not allowed to speak for itself, with overlaid dialogue sometimes an unwelcome distraction; no matter how good a speech is, you come to a concert like this to appreciate the *music*, not the words. But that's a petty grouse. Hopefully the Symphonic Spectacular will now become a regular fixture. If it comes to a town near you, don't miss it. <http://bit.ly/WhoSpectacular>

DON'T MISS IT!

Nine Worlds

7-9 August 2015, Radisson Hotel Heathrow

The annual pop culture con returns for another celebration of all things geek

FEW CONVENTIONS ARE AS welcoming as Nine Worlds. The weekend-long geekfest prides itself on an inclusive atmosphere, a diverse range of tracks and a zero tolerance anti-harassment policy that must never get an airing given the rarely less-than-friendly attendees we've encountered in previous years. If you've ever been intimidated by the idea of attending a convention, there simply isn't a better place to start.

This year's Nine Worlds runs from Thursday 7 August (with an evening dedicated to socialising and "low key" events ahead of a formal launch on Friday morning) through to Sunday 9 August, once again at the Radisson Blu hotel at Heathrow. Much like last year, there will be around 30 tracks, each with dedicated panels, discussions and activities, including: all the books, comics fandom, fan fic, food and drink, future tech, history, LARP, LGBTQ+ fandom, podcasting, skepticism, *Star Trek*, Tolkien, videogames culture and worlds of Whedon. This year's event will also play host to the 2015 David Gemmell Awards For Fantasy.

Tickets may seem a little pricey (£95 for adults if you book before 30 June) but it's still good value for a weekend-long residential con with games, music and movie marathons running through the evenings for anyone with the energy to burn the candle at both ends. As an entirely volunteer-run event the organisers are always on the look-out for full-time volunteers and any



Party time at the 2014 event.



Nine Worlds is packed with discussion panels and sessions.



Competition for the best seats is fierce.



Cosplay is... impressive.

© JAMES DREW (4)

CON REPORT

Lawgiver MKII: A Celebration Of Dredd

25 May 2015, Doubletree by Hilton, Bristol

Steven Ellis checks out the latest *Dredd* convention

THE JUDGES WERE OUT IN force on the Spring Bank Holiday as Rule 32's *Judge Dredd* convention. Lawgiver descended on Bristol.

Spread across five rooms, Lawgiver MKII was full of things to do and see. With two dedicated rooms for panels running all day (covering subjects such as Women in Dredd's world, Mega City architecture, Dredd continuity and the ethics of the Justice Department), a room full of 2000 AD artists showing off and selling their wares, another with traders' tables, and a final room packed with props and costumes from the 2012 *Dredd* film, the event certainly felt big.

There were a good number of *Judge Dredd* creative types in attendance, including writers Michael Carroll and Rob Williams, and artists Pete Doherty, Jock, Patrick Goddard and Nick Percival. Dylan Teague and Ryan Brown were doing sketches for attendees and selling original art and prints of their work. All the writers and artists were mingling and chatting with guests, which gave the whole event a very relaxed feel.

The event was a brilliant success and a great day out and there's already talk of making next year's Lawgiver III even bigger and better. www.rule32promotions.co.uk



An offer you surely can't refuse.

UPCOMING

Dates meet diary, diary meet dates...

Hampshire Con

25-26 July

Admire *Mad Max*'s Interceptor, learn to wield a lightsaber and meet Fifth Doctor Peter Davison with companion Sarah Sutton at Hampshire's TV, Film and Comic Con. www.hampshirecon.com

Yorkshire Cosplay Con 8

8 August

The name says it all – dig out your best sci-fi duds and head down to the fabulously named Magna Science Adventure Centre for a day of anime, gaming and comic books. www.yorkshirecosplayconvention.co.uk

Dublin Comic Con

8-9 August

Wander round a series of elaborate sci-fi sets and displays (for now!) or buy a ticket and attend a packed day of panels in Dublin city centre. www.dublincomiccon.com

Auto Assembly

21-23 August

Roll out for Europe's largest *Transformers* convention with a range of writers and voice actors in attendance, as well as dealer stands and an artists' alley. www.autoassembly.org.uk

FrightFest

27-31 August

Can you handle five days in a West End cinema watching the most twisted upcoming movies? If your answer is "yes" you might like to know tickets for this year's FrightFest go on sale on 4 July. www.frightfest.co.uk



Blastermind

Insert coin, quizzers: how much do you know about videogame crossovers?



1 Who played Mario and Luigi in the ill-advised 1993 *Super Mario Bros* movie?

2 Expert difficulty: Which non-actor took on the role of Mario in *The Super Mario Brothers Super Show*?



3 Which high-kicking star was originally set to portray Johnny Cage in the first *Mortal Kombat* game?

4 Hard mode: The same actor was later digitised (somewhat clunkily) as a character in which rival fighting game?

5 Mark Hamill played Christopher "Maverick" Blair in which space-piloting videogame series?

6 Bonus: Which actor portrayed Blair in the 1999 film of the game?

7 Name the William Shatner novel series which inspired a litany of mixed media spin-offs, including a 1995 PC first-person-shooter.

8 Extra life: which prolific American SF author is known to have ghostwritten the series?



9 Which film-related company published games including *Day Of The Tentacle* and *The Secret Of Monkey Island*?

10 Power up: Name the movie director who collaborated with that company on the plot of flagship adventure *The Dig*.

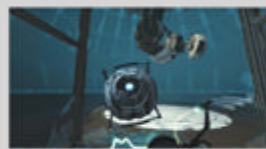
11 Who muscled his way through 2005's *Doom* movie as the BFG-toting Sarge?

12 Secret level: The actor who played Sarge's teammate John "Reaper" Grimm later played which lawman?

13 In which videogame-turned-movie series has the Umbrella Corporation released the T-virus?

14 Continue: By which name is that game series known in Japan?

15 Which Brit voiced helper bot Wheatley in Valve's *Portal 2*?



16 Special move: Which actor voices similar character Ghost in Bungie shooter *Destiny*?

Name these corpse cameos from *Duke Nukem 3D*.



20 Final boss: Which '80s heartthrob pop star played Steve Fox in 2010's *Tekken* film?

ANSWERS 1 Bob Hoskins and John Leguizamo 2 "Captain" Lou Albano 3 Jean-Claude Van Damme 4 Street Fighter: The Movie 5 Wing Commander 6 Freddie Prinze Jr 7 Tekken 8 Ron Goulart 9 Lucasarts 10 Steven Spielberg 11 Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson 12 Judge Dredd (Karl Urban) 13 Red 14 Luke Goss 15 Stephen Merchant 16 Peter Dinklage 17 Luke Skywalker 18 Indiana Jones 19 Snake Plissken 20 Luke Goss

HOW DID YOU DO?
Which cluster of pixels are you?



0-5
Diddy Kong



6-10
Little Mac



11-15
Super Mario



16-19
Mega Man



20
King Dedede

The World Of SFX

Don't stop here: there's always more for you to read...



SFX ON GAMESRADAR

SFX's online home is now at **GamesRadar.com**, where you can find all manner of stuff that we can't fit in the regular magazine. Did you know, for instance, that we have daily news updates of what's hot in sci-fi and fantasy? Or that we're reviewing episodes of TV shows like *Game Of Thrones* there? Or that we have a **weekly Star Wars show** called *Stay On Target* (<http://bit.ly/swontarget>), featuring members of the SFX team? You can also find new film and television features every day, competitions, trailers, film reviews and lots more besides. Make sure you bookmark gamesradar.com/sfx. Today!

TOTAL FILM

This month *Total Film* brings you the massive Ten Coolest feature, which picks out – yes – the ten coolest things hitting the screen this summer, from the dizzy heights of *Fantastic Four* (with word from its stars) to the dusty plains of *The Martian* and beyond to the skeezy stages of *Magic Mike XXL*. All this plus a look at *Dogme 95*, a breakdown of *Terminator* spin-offs and the forthcoming robot uprising, reviews of every movie hitting the big and small screen, and much more. Get it from your newsagent, and tell them they're the coolest.



THREE FANTASTIC SPECIAL EDITIONS

Would you believe that our sleep-avoiding magazine collective has not one, not two, but three fabulous mega magazines out this month! **Back To The '80s** (on sale 1 July) celebrates the decade of *Back To The Future* and *RoboCop*; **The A-Z Of Superheroes** (on sale 14 July) brings together everyone from Batman to the Incredibles to Judge Dredd; while **The 100 Greatest Sci-fi Characters Of All Time** (on sale 26 June) has all the folk you love from the worlds of SF and fantasy. Look out for the trio in shops, or get more info and order them online (with free postage) at <http://bit.ly/filmguides>.



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"I'm broken. I'm doing facts on ants!"

THE MAN FROM UNCLE

GOING



S O L O

OPEN CHANNEL SFX! NICK
SETCHFIELD INTERCEPTS
THE CAST AND CREATORS OF
A REBORN SPY-FI CLASSIC



Vikander, Hammer and Cavill – and a fabulous pair of wheels.

NAME A SUAVE, LETHAL superspy who sprung from the mind of Ian Fleming. A Martini-cool ladykiller, sharp of suit and shot; a globe-hopping secret agent who defined the glittering, outrageous world of '60s spy capers. Too easy? There's one proviso. If your answer contains the words James or Bond you will be diced with a laser and fed to the sharks. No cheating now...

Napoleon Solo is Fleming's other great contribution to the espionage game, brought to deadly, dapper life by Robert Vaughn in hit TV show *The Man From UNCLE*. Teamed with David McCallum as taciturn, Beatle-mopped Soviet operative Illya Kuryakin, Solo fought the Cold War on the small screen while 007 ruled the big.

Now the mismatched agents of the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement are back, reactivated for a blockbuster mission by Guy Ritchie and Lionel Wigram, the director/producer team behind Sherlock Holmes' reinvention as a brawling Baker Street bohemian with an uncanny resemblance to Robert Downey Jr.

"Warner Bros came to us with a list of projects after *Sherlock Holmes*," says Wigram as SFX meets the filmmaking duo in a sun-flooded Rome, suitably Euro-glam setting for some of the movie's key sequences. "We looked at *Man From UNCLE* and thought, 'Hmm, we've always wanted to do a spy movie. And this is interesting because instead of a solo agent – instead of Jason Bourne or James Bond or Harry Palmer, your typical lone spy – it's two agents. There's a story behind it – a Russian and an American teaming up. It feels like an opportunity here to do something different in the spy genre, but still do a '60s spy movie, an homage to the Sean Connery James Bonds, to the Harry Palmers, to all those great movies.'"

LONG MISSION

The studio had struggled to reboot the *UNCLE* franchise for over 20 years, developing and discarding a multitude of drafts and visions. The project tore through helmers as diverse as Quentin Tarantino and Steven Soderbergh, wooed and lost A-listers from Tom Cruise to George Clooney. Did that feel like two decades of intensive research and development?

"No, it was a completely clean slate," says Ritchie, a bullish, mischievous presence next to the urbane and affable Wigram. "And actually I was completely unaware that anyone was ever after it! It's only relatively recently that I found out, when the first trailer came out, and people told me – I never knew anyone else was attached to it! We did inherit a script but there was nothing we could do with it, so we threw that in the bin and started again."

"I was an executive at Warner Bros and I read various drafts over the years," ➔

Terrific production art for one of the movie's big setpieces...



...and how the scene will look in the finished film.

"WE DID THE RESEARCH WHEN WE WERE 12, WATCHING JAMES BOND OVER AND OVER AGAIN"

adds Wigram, "and it's understandable why they weren't made. Some very respectable filmmakers, but for some reason I don't think they ever quite understood the '60s spy genre. We grew up on those movies as kids. We watched them time and time again. We're completely immersed in it. It was our natural language. They say write what you know. Well, we know that genre really well. We didn't have to think about it. Yes, we did the research. We did the research when we were 12, watching James Bond over and over again."

NEW BUT OLD

While Bond has strolled coolly into the 21st century, Ritchie and Wigram were determined to preserve *UNCLE*'s retro trappings: the razor-edged, Rat Pack tailoring, jet-age Pan Am glamour and the kind of high-stakes, high-style outrageousness that can only safely be contained within the perimeters of the 1960s.

"We had a ten-minute conversation about being contemporary," shares Ritchie. "It didn't go any further than that. Everybody else was doing contemporary stuff and we quite fancied period."

"We were pretty much clear that we didn't want to do it if we couldn't do it in the '60s," adds Wigram. "The period is so rich in terms of storytelling. It's a great world, in terms of style, the story, what's going on in the world."

"It made it exotic, for all sorts of reasons," says Ritchie, who relished the decade's visual possibilities. "I like to be transported into a fantasy when I go to the cinema. So I'm more sympathetic to period than I am to the realism of the contemporary world – that's just not for me. I'd rather be off-centre. It's easier to create a world."

But don't expect Ritchie to replicate the iconography of the TV show.

"No, there was nothing I wanted to pick up on visually. What interested me was that the show captured a tone. Some of that informed this film and some of it didn't, but just the title *The Man From UNCLE* is kind of a cool title. The idea that you've got a Russkie and an American who have to get on is just a great idea – and after that it's open season."

So no triangular UNCLE ID badges? No nifty communicator pens?

"I do quite like some of the communicator pens," Ritchie grins. "So some of the technology was important. You think, 'Oh, I'll take that and leave that, that'll work and that won't work...' Obviously we left a lot of stuff behind. We did have UNCLE HQ written in at one point. We went quite large on the HQ. It just didn't feel like it was part of the movie. I'm glad we didn't. It felt like it was another ending, stuck on the ending." ➔

Believe it or not, this is Pussy Galore's helicopter from *Goldfinger*!





Alicia Vikander plays Gaby, who's not afraid of getting down and dirty.

THE MAN FROM UNCLE



**"YOU DON'T
REALLY KNOW
WHAT SIDE
SHE'S ON..."**

**Alicia Vikander is
the key to the
conspiracy**

So who do you play?

I play Gaby Teller. She's brought up behind the border in Germany and is a car mechanic. She's not the typical female lead in one of the spy films. She's not very girly, she's very tomboyish. Later on she becomes the key for Illya and Napoleon to help them to defuse the conspiracy that Victoria is threatening the world with. Her father is captured by her, and he is a German scientist who is building her some nuclear weapons.

Were you familiar with the original UNCLE show?

I grew up in Sweden but I had it running late afternoons. When I came back from school to do my homework it was usually on. My dad loved the series and I saw it with him, so I did grow up with it, really.

What was the appeal of this movie for you?

For once it's a big blockbuster film where the female characters are really, really strong. It's not the typical girl. And that was something I wanted to approach. In the film you never really know what my character is really in it for. You don't really know what side she's on, and she also makes quite a big transition, being behind the [Berlin] Wall and having been a part of this culture and then she does the journey of stepping into the world, and doing that at a time [in the 1960s] when it comes as an explosion. She gets to dress up and pretend to be this luxurious housewife in Rome. It was a fun part that I really wanted to be part of. And I wanted to work with Guy. I wanted to see how it was to work on a Guy Ritchie set, how he made his films so gritty and witty and fun.



The film looks like it was a real pain to make...

**"I'M NOT SURE IF THRUSH
MEANT THE SAME THING IN
THE '60S. YOU CAN'T HAVE
THRUSH ANYMORE"**

"And we wanted to do the origin story," adds Wigram. "We wanted to do the birth of UNCLE. If we do a sequel maybe there will be triangular badges!"

Also absent is UNCLE's eternal nemesis THRUSH, the evil cabal whose fearsome name is now more likely to be whispered in chemists than behind the doors of the intelligence community. Did Ritchie not believe he could bring them to the screen with a straight face?

"Yeah, that's the problem," he smiles. "I'm not sure if THRUSH meant the same thing in the '60s. You're right, you can't have THRUSH anymore."

FROM THE BEGINNING

As Wigram pitches it, this is UNCLE Begins – the secret origin we never saw.

"We used the TV show as our basic inspiration. In the show the UNCLE organisation already exists and Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin, a Russian and an American, are working together in this sort of United Nations of agencies... and you never understand why. It's in the '60s, at the height of the Cold War. How is it that just after the Cuban Missile Crisis a Russian and an American have to team up? We thought it would be interesting to tell that story."

The movie recruits Solo and Kuryakin for their inaugural mission, investigating the case of a vanished German scientist and a dastardly scheme threatening the balance of nuclear power. The uneasy partners are played by Henry Cavill and Armie Hammer, whose chemistry, you imagine, was crucial.

"Yeah, it was," says Ritchie, "but that took care of itself. Films take on a momentum of their own, and it was clear that you would want them to get on. Eventually you realise that they fell out of the same tree, just from different orchards. It was about recognising the similarity of their tone."

Wigram promises a film that's "funny but not a spoof". Given its breezy, sardonic tone, how does Ritchie keep the sense of threat and peril feeling real?

"That's a good question. At what point do you go too broad and it undermines your stakes? And at what point do you take yourself too seriously and lose a form of entertainment? That's an ongoing creative battle. It's really a question of keeping a muzzle on the humour. I'm always encouraged to put more humour in, but I don't want to, because, invariably, you lose the stakes."

"On the whole the scripts we write are written seriously," Ritchie continues, "and then I allow humour to creep in on the day. ➔"



Production designs for the all-important gadgetry.

SPY GUYS

SFX goes undercover with Henry Cavill and Armie Hammer, the men from UNGLE

So what attracted you to *The Man From UNGLE*?

● HENRY CAVILL: The main reason was Guy Ritchie. He was the real draw. He's a fantastic director. He has a body of work which is flawless.

● ARMIE HAMMER: His body is flawless.

HC: His body is flawless as well [laughs]!

You're stepping into the shoes of icons. Are you channelling your predecessors in any way?

● AH: I'm channeling Robert Vaughn, actually. He's doing David McCallum.

● HC: Yeah, we thought we might switch it up a little bit.

● AH: Did you catch that? Maybe we didn't do it right.

● HC: I didn't watch any of *The Man From UNGLE*. [Robert Vaughn] did a great performance in that and I want to leave that as his and his alone. If you start watching that stuff you start subconsciously and inadvertently mimicking a performance and I didn't want to do that. I avoided watching it. I just drew from Guy and I drew from the script.

● AH: I really was not basing much of Illya off David McCallum. It was a fantastic show, but I think slowly over the course of it you could hear David McCallum's accent almost going Scottish... So I thought okay, I won't do that! The movie is its own iteration of something that came from this TV show. So the bones are there, the characters are there, the comedy is there, the humour's there, the spy element... all that stuff is there. We've infused a little bit more modern life, we've infused some action, we've infused some Guy Ritchie style, all of those things.

So how did you master the accent?

● HC: He didn't.

● AH: Just a lot of work. We had a dialect coach on set with us. My dad's side of the family was all Russian, I had Russian people around when I was growing up. It was an accent that I was more or less familiar with.

Henry, you famously came close to playing James Bond. Does this role finally scratch that itch for you?

● HC: James Bond's a very different thing. As much as Ian Fleming may have created both characters, they're different - especially with the way Bond is in style now. If we were talking about previous Bonds then perhaps you could call the two similar, but Napoleon Solo is a very different animal. He's not for Queen and country. He's for Napoleon Solo and Napoleon Solo.

What was the main challenge for you on this movie?

● AH: Because we shot in London my biggest challenge was not drinking too many pints and not eating too many Scotch eggs. I was eating about four Scotch eggs a day. It finally got to the point where Guy said, "Come here, love" - he pulled me aside to the monitor and he goes, "Do you see this? So this is a still of you earlier today." He pushes a button and a different picture comes up. And I probably looked 15 lb lighter in my face. He goes, "This is the first day of shooting! Stop eating Scotch eggs!" And I was like, "Alright! Fine! Only one a day!"

● HC: He eats so many Scotch eggs that every time I see a Scotch egg on a menu now I'm like, "Armie! How's it going?"

● AH: I ate so many Scotch eggs I almost grew feathers.

● HC: Feathers and a little curly tail.

THE MAN FROM UNCLE



"SHE'S PLOTTING TO END THE WORLD!"

Elizabeth Debicki talks '60s style and timeless villainy

Tell us about your character.

I play Victoria, the villain of the film. My character is English but she's married this playboy who has no idea what she's doing with his money. She's basically plotting to end the world, in a very casual fashion. She has kidnapped Gaby's father who is this brilliant nuclear physicist and under duress he's building her a bomb.

Did the '60s feel like a wonderful toybox to play in?

It was amazing. It was really transgressive - things were just happening. People were experimenting with fashion and with music and with cinema. Italian cinema from the '60s is just wild. I'd never seen anything like it when I started researching this film. There's one film in particular which is one of the strangest experiences I've ever had watching my laptop - *The Tenth Victim*. Ursula Andress is in it. I took a lot of inspiration from Ursula. She's an incredibly beautiful creature and to me she idealised everything that the Italian '60s thing was - so glamorous and so sexy and so supercool.

Did you take inspiration from any great female villains?

No, I actually didn't base it on anything. I almost had a vague understanding of villain-ness - it sounds bizarre but it is a thing. You think, "What does a villain do?" They swivel in chairs, they've got little cats, they laugh, they plot, they do all that sort of stuff. And actually with all the stereotypes you think, "Why reinvent the wheel?" And so if you own that and then you put your own twist on it... That's what I tried to do.

So you're like a glamorous Blofeld?

Completely, yeah. I'm going to coin that.

Guy Ritchie instructs Henry Cavill in the ways of the superspy.

Invariably what happens is we realise we can make something more entertaining. Honestly, my biggest battle is to stop [the cast] being funnier. That is a whole wrestling match. The instinct is there to make it funny, and I've just got to hold that back as much as I can."

The Man From UNCLE follows *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, another movie that restored a much-missed wink to the spy genre. Even Sam Mendes promises that *SPECTRE*, Bond's next adventure, will have "mischief". Is this a post-*Bourne* backlash? Are audiences hungering for a lighter, wittier take on big-screen espionage?

"It's a complete coincidence," says Ritchie. "[Matthew] Vaughn, who made *Kingsman*, is my ex-partner, and we know each other very well. We shot our films at the same time - he was in the studio next door - and I had no idea that he was making the tone that he was making. And he had no idea I was making the tone I was making. It was just one of those things. It just seemed to happen. Who knows, *Kingsman*'s been very successful, financially, and I'm sure they'll end up doing another one of those. Maybe there is an appetite for that. Bond's got more and more serious. There's plenty of room for that and maybe there's room for this."

UNCLE's resurrection takes inspiration from cinema history in other ways - and not just the fact that a helicopter in the film is the very one Pussy Galore flew in *Goldfinger* ("There's only one geezer in the world who can fly it," says Ritchie, amazed). While its makers namecheck the European masterpieces of Fellini and Antonioni, they're equally happy geeking out about mid-'60s Bond knock-offs, all those glossy continental adventures set in what Ian Fleming called "thrilling cities".

"Everyone wanted to go to Naples and Rome," says Ritchie of the film's camera-bait locations. "We fell in love with both cities, actually. But again that's of the genre. It needed to feel quite pan-European. We looked at all the different cities in Europe and thought 'Which one's got the best food?'... And that was that!"



Production art featuring a hint of '60s Ken Adam, no?



Sketches for Solo, Kuryakin and Victoria Vinciguerra's debonair threads.

And if they win a sequel, and have a chance to pin those triangular ID badges on Cavill and Hammer, where would they next assign their heroes?

Ritchie glances at Wigram. "Where's the next place we want to visit? We'll go to Istanbul next time..."

"That's where we're thinking."

Are they just looking at menus?

Ritchie laughs. "It's either menus or wine lists..."

You sense that Napoleon Solo would approve. **SFX**

The Man From UNCLE opens on 14 August.

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THE SPYING GAME

BEYOND BOND... NICK SETCHFIELD DUSTS DOWN THE FILES ON SPY-FI'S OTHER LEGENDARY OPERATIVES

TOP SECRET

AGENTS:

NAPOLEON SOLO & ILLYA KURYAKIN

ALIASES: Robert Vaughn & David McCallum

AGENCY: UNCLE (United Network Command for Law and Enforcement)

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1964-1968; 1983

MISSION DOSSIERS: The Man From UNCLE, Return Of The Man From UNCLE

INTEL: A microdot of an idea from Ian Fleming became TV's answer to Bond. Vaughn had slick Don Draper charm but McCallum was the cool, cerebral heartthrob.

ICONIC GADGETRY:

- Communicator pen;
- convertible Walther P-38.

EYES ONLY: FBI Director J Edgar Hoover had to insist UNCLE was fictitious.



TOP SECRET

AGENTS:

JAMES WEST & ARTEMUS GORDON

ALIASES: Robert Conrad & Ross Martin

AGENCY: United States Secret Service

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1965-1969, 1979-80

MISSION DOSSIER: The Wild, Wild West, Revisited, More

INTEL: One of the earliest glimmerings of steampunk, this frontier-set show mashed the spy and Western genres into a uniquely outlandish confection.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Concealed sleeve-gun; private train with onboard lab.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

APRIL DANCER

ALIAS: Stefanie Powers

AGENCY: UNCLE (United Network Command for Law and Enforcement)

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1966-67

MISSION DOSSIER: The Girl From UNCLE

INTEL: A camp, colourful extension of the UNCLE brand, this femme-powered spin-off bombed despite a \$1,000-an-episode budget for "the latest mod fashions".

ICONIC GADGETRY: Exploding earrings;

- gas-spraying perfume atomiser.

EYES ONLY: The name April Dancer was the creation of Ian Fleming.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

JIM PHELPS

ALIAS: Peter Graves

AGENCY: IMF (Impossible Missions Force)

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1966-73; 1988

MISSION DOSSIER: Mission: Impossible

INTEL: The lit fuse title sequence and urgent, pulse-troubling theme reliably primed you for grim-jawed escapades in studio backlots doubling as dodgy foreign nations.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Full-face rubber masks;

- self-destructing assignment tapes.

EYES ONLY: The working title for the show was Briggs' Squad.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

MATT HELM

ALIAS: Dean Martin

AGENCY: ICE (Intelligence and Counter Espionage)

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1966-1968

MISSION DOSSIERS: The Silencers, Murderers' Row, The Ambushers, The Wrecking Crew

INTEL: The Rat Pack's Deano was America's answer to 007 — assuming the question had been mumbled by a drunk in Vegas. Crooning soundtracked the action.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Blade-launching camera.

EYES ONLY: Helm's personal secretary was called Lovey Kravezit. Carry on!



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

JOHN DRAKE

ALIAS: Patrick McGoochan

AGENCY: M9

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1960-68

MISSION DOSSIER: Danger Man

INTEL: Moralist McGoochan said no to Bond's bed-hopping ways, favouring this focused, no-frills hero. Did Drake become Number 6 in *The Prisoner*? You decide.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Clock camera; tape-recording electric shaver.

EYES ONLY: One of the series' provisional titles was *Lone Wolf*.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

DEREK FLINT

ALIAS: James Coburn

AGENCY: ZOWIE (Zonal Organisation World Intelligence Espionage)

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1966-1967

MISSION DOSSIERS: Our Man Flint, In Like Flint

INTEL: Glacier-cool James Coburn was the lean, lethal ubermensch with the Judo black-belt, Olympic medals and party trick ability to stop his own heart.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Cigarette lighter grappling hook.

EYES ONLY: An unmade third Flint adventure was to be titled *F Is For Flint*.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

SYDNEY BRISTOW

ALIAS: Jennifer Garner

AGENCY: SD-6

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 2001-06

MISSION DOSSIER: Alias

INTEL: An early calling card for the mind of JJ Abrams, *Alias* revived classic '60s spy tropes and added mind-reelingly mazy 21st century plotting. Keep up at the back!

ICONIC GADGETRY: Bracelet garotte; lipgloss miniature camera.

EYES ONLY: Leathery 007 Roger Moore starred in 2002 episode "The Prophecy" as Edward Poole.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

MAXWELL SMART

ALIAS: Don Adams

AGENCY: Control

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1965-70; 1980, 1989

MISSION DOSSIERS: Get Smart, The Nude Bomb, Get Smart, Again!

INTEL: Comedy tsar Mel Brooks was one of the brains behind this witty, relentlessly inventive spy-fi spoof, a stab at crossing 007 with Inspector Clouseau.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Shoe phone; camera disguised as soup bowl; Cone of Silence.

EYES ONLY: A three-part story was planned as a movie, *A Man Called Smart*.



TOP SECRET

AGENT:

JOHN STEED

ALIAS: Patrick Macnee

AGENCY: Ministry of Defence

OPERATIONAL YEARS: 1961-69; 1976-77

MISSION DOSSIERS: The Avengers, The New Avengers

INTEL: Armed with old-world charm and a succession of alpha female sidekicks, Steed defended the nation in adventures that dripped '60s style and whimsy.

ICONIC GADGETRY: Steel-rimmed bowler; swordstick brolly.

EYES ONLY: Steed's biography claimed he beat Eton bully James Bond.





THE MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
TEAM IS BACK IN ACTION.
STEPHEN KELLY BRINGS US
THE CLASSIFIED BRIEFING...



YOUR SEQUEL,
SHOULD YOU CHOOSE
TO ACCEPT IT...

Each *Mission: Impossible* film has come with a new director and the fifth one, *Rogue Nation*, is no exception. This time it's Christopher McQuarrie, who has previously worked with Tom Cruise on *Valkyrie*, *Jack Reacher* and *Edge Of Tomorrow*. Setting out his vision for the film earlier this year, he said that, while still bringing the action, the feeling will be more like an episode of the '60s TV show, shot with an "old school" approach.

Rogue Nation will carry on from the ending of *Ghost Protocol*, where Ethan was alerted to a shady organisation called the Syndicate. Known in the original series for playing more of a domestic mob role (it was the '60s, after all), *Rogue Nation* will cast them as *Mission: Impossible*'s SPECTRE: a near-mythical "anti-IMF" of global assassins and rogue operatives. Naturally, they must be taken down.

Little is known about the elusive leader of the Syndicate, who is the main antagonist of *Rogue Nation*. The only information declassified so far is that he's played by Sean Harris, aka the ginger one from *Prometheus*. Whoever he is, let's hope he's more like Philip Seymour Hoffman's Owen Davian in *M:I III* than whatever-his-name-was from *Ghost Protocol*.

Given that there's an anti-IMF knocking around, it seems like mighty poor timing to disband the real thing.

But that's what happens in *Rogue Nation*, courtesy of Alec Baldwin's hostile head of the CIA, who you can probably bet on being a triple agent or something. This, yet again, leaves Ethan and co going rogue and requiring the help of another new cast member: Rebecca Ferguson (*The White Queen*, *Hercules*), who plays mysterious badass Ilsa Faust. Again, don't be surprised when she rips off her face to reveal that she's really Alec Baldwin.

The gang are back! Well, the men are. Reprising their roles are Jeremy Renner as IMF agent William Brandt, Simon Pegg as quasi-Q Benji Dunn and Ving Rhames as Luther Stickell, the hacker who's been in every *Mission: Impossible* film so far. Apparently not returning, however, is *Ghost Protocol*'s Paula Patton, who joins the franchise's list of women to have only appeared in one film. McQuarrie has said that he approached Patton and *M:I III*'s Maggie Q to appear in *Rogue Nation* but both were "unavailable".

Whether it's scaling a building in Dubai or jumping up and down on Oprah's sofa, Tom Cruise is not afraid of outlandish stunts. And as you may have spied in the trailer, *Rogue Nation* features one of his biggest yet: hanging off an Airbus A400M aircraft being flown 5,000 feet above the English countryside.

According to Cruise in an interview with *Yahoo*, it's "undoubtedly the most dangerous thing [I've] ever done." However, McQuarrie teases that this death-defying stunt is actually one of two "incredibly physically punishing things" featured in the film.

It wouldn't be a spy movie without clocking up some serious air miles. Vienna State Opera, Austria, sees Cruise and Ferguson performing some daring roof-top jumps, while Morocco is where we'll see Ethan racing an F80 BMW M3. *Rogue Nation*'s most dangerous location, though? London – where Cruise nearly got hit by a double-decker bus. (You can watch a clip of it on YouTube, if that's your thing.)

It seems that Christmas has come early, with *Rogue Nation* hitting cinemas six months before its original release date. The reason why is unknown, but it would be safe to assume that Paramount would like to avoid premiering after November's *SPECTRE* to then compete with the festive force that is *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. According to McQuarrie, it's put pressure on post-production, saying "we're always in a hurry, now we're in a big f'in hurry." Still, coming out as a summer blockbuster is hardly going to compromise box-office security. **SFX**

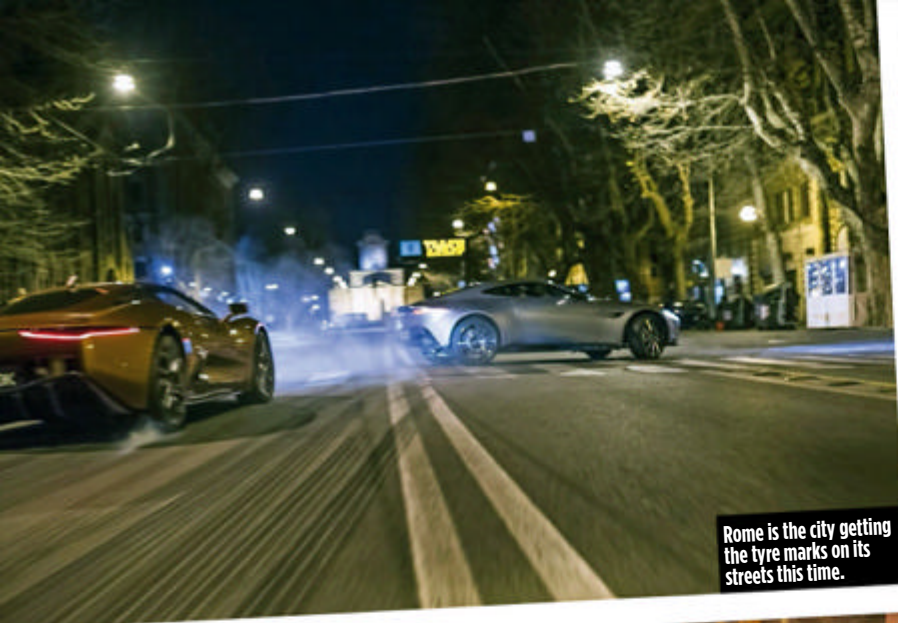
***Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation* opens on 30 July. This feature will self-destruct in five seconds.**





WE'RE EXPECTING YOU, MR BOND...

007'S NEXT ADVENTURE
IS ON ITS WAY. NICK
SETCHFIELD GATHERS THE
CLASSIFIED INTEL...



Rome is the city getting the tyre marks on its streets this time.



Monica Bellucci goes for a take as Lucia Sciarra.



Has Daniel Craig also packed his skis?



Dave Bautista proves to be a double-barrelled menace.



Christoph Waltz as "Franz Oberhauser", and (inset) out of the shadows.

Director Sam Mendes promises 007's 24th official big-screen mission will be powered by a personal story. "The movie is entirely driven by Bond," he reveals. "He is on the hunt, on the trail of somebody." Crucially, the plot is ignited by "a cryptic message from Bond's past".

Expect connective tissue to *Skyfall*, the first film in the series to unlock the secret history of MI6's favoured blunt instrument. Mendes says *SPECTRE* is "the second part of a crucial story of Bond's childhood". But it's a movie set to deal with Bond's future, too: "It's about whether or not to pursue the life he's always pursued, whether he matters and is he going to continue or not."

Move over, Hydra... As the title declares, definitive criminal cabal *SPECTRE* is back in business for the first time since 1971's *Diamonds Are Forever*. But is cat-caressing mastermind Ernst Stavro Blofeld also part of the world-threatening package? Star Christoph Waltz insists he's playing a man named Franz Oberhauser, dismissing the Blofeld speculation outright: "That is absolutely untrue. That rumour started on the internet, and the internet is a pest." Piranha pool or electrified chair, Mr Waltz?

Oberhauser is a character name with a link to the original Ian Fleming canon. In the short story "Octopussy" we learn that ski instructor Hannes Oberhauser became a surrogate father

to the young Bond after the tragic death of the boy's parents. Could Franz be his son – and a childhood chum of our vodka-swilling hero?

Guardians Of The Galaxy star Dave Bautista provides the muscle and the menace as outsized *SPECTRE* henchman Mr Hinx. He rocks a funky double-barrelled AF2011 pistol and also gets behind the wheel of a high-spec Jaguar C-X75. He's no grunting, Bond-thumping lunk, though. Bautista reveals that Hinx is "very well-dressed and very well-mannered. I'm not just here to fight people. He has a sense of humour. He definitely knows what a metaphor is."

The latest ladies in Bond's life are Italy's Monica Bellucci as Lucia Sciarra, rumoured to be widowed by Bond in the pre-titles sequence, and France's Léa Seydoux as Madeleine Swann, a mysterious doctor who crosses Bond's path as he investigates the treacherous *SPECTRE* conspiracy.

Team MI6 is present and correct: Ralph Fiennes returns as M, battling dark political forces, while Naomi Harris encores as Eve Moneypenny. Ben Whishaw, meanwhile, gets to take tech-hipster Q into the field...

Mendes and Daniel Craig share a love for 1973's voodoo-flavoured adventure *Live And Let Die*. *SPECTRE* may have a similarly macabre, supernaturally-tinged touch. The

pre-titles sequence restages Mexico's Day of the Dead festival, placing 007 among the ghoul-faced revellers for a spectacular pursuit through the historic streets of Mexico City...

SPECTRE will up the globe-hopping quotient after the relatively UK-centric *Skyfall*. Rome is the setting for a thrilling nocturnal car chase between Hinx's Jag and Bond's gorgeous new Aston Martin DB10 – a car created exclusively for the film, and rumoured to pack some "optional extras" – while equally adrenalised Austrian action sequences return Bond to a classic backdrop of mountains and snow. Other locations include north-east Morocco, Tangiers and good old rainy London, scene of a power boat chase on the Thames.

The *SPECTRE* teaser trailer foregrounded a bleak, creepy tone, all icy, haunted menace and sinister Illuminati vibes, but this may be the movie that restores a lighter touch to the superspy franchise. Sam Mendes says "*SPECTRE* will be everything you would expect from a Bond movie but, in terms of the last movie, maybe a little more variety, maybe a little more mischief..."

One crucial question remains: will the iconic gunbarrel finally be restored to its rightful place at the start of the movie? For now, that intel is stamped EYES ONLY... 

SPECTRE opens on Friday 6 November.

The latest
Marvel big-
screen superhero
is anything but. He'll
pack a punch though,
the director tells
Nick Setchfield

SHRINK



IMAGES COURTESY

“This is really a smaller scale movie for Marvel, says Peyton Reed, director of *Ant-Man*.”

If Reed realises he's just deployed the perfect pun he chooses not to acknowledge it. His film's hero weaponises the very concept of smaller scale, after all – an incredible shrinking man whose icky, insect-bossing powers make him one of the unlikelier players in the Marvel pantheon. Now he's made the big screen in a multi-generational tale that sees petty crim Scott Lang [Paul Rudd] inherit the hi-tech Ant-suit from original Silver Age crimefighter Henry Pym [Michael Douglas].

Reed had his own, rather more controversial legacy to inherit. *Ant-Man* was originally a dream project for fan fave director Edgar Wright. When Wright left the project in 2014 after almost a decade of development the internet, naturally, cried for blood. Reed was the man who braved the Twitter crossfire and stepped up to deliver the film to the screen.

Now he's briefly surfacing from what he calls “deep, deep post-production”, sparing time to talk to *SFX* while finessing Marvel's latest stab at multiplex domination, the final film of Phase Two. “We're getting the final visual effects shots, we're mixing the reels, we're doing last-minute visual tweaks and colour correction. We're finally seeing light at the end of the ant tunnel!”

You're a comics fan, right?

Yeah, I grew up a pretty intense Marvel Comics nerd. Like most kids my age I started reading *Spider-Man* and that led to every other character in the Marvel universe. My oldest brother had a friend who had an amazing collection – a trunk full of Marvel comics from the '60s up through to the early '70s. At some point he decided he was going to become a fundamentalist Christian and that reading comic books was satanic, so he was going to get rid of this whole trunk. Luckily my brother told me, “Hey, my buddy has this stuff – you want them?” I was like, “Absolutely!” So I was the beneficiary of this amazing collection.

Were there any copies of *Ant-Man* in there?

There were definitely copies of old *Avengers* issues and some of the old *Tales To Astonish* stuff. I really became a Hank Pym Ant-Man fan through *The Avengers*. I was well-versed in Ant-Man.



The film will have fun with its shrinking concept.

What appealed to you about him as a character, as a concept?

I liked that the comic book version of the Avengers was a pretty eclectic group of heroes. It was Thor, it was Hulk and Iron Man... and Ant-Man. I liked the creative ways in which the powers would come into play in battles. And I always liked that he was an underdog, that he almost had this inferiority complex about his powers – and probably even his size – compared to these other heroes. And when you're a kid and you're out playing with your action figures, the size of Ant-Man is very appealing. I think that's the case in our movie as well. When Ant-Man shrinks down and suddenly there's a whole action sequence that takes place on the floor or on a train set or something, there's a real parallel to how kids use their imagination.

It's a very different power set to any of the other Marvel heroes we've seen...

Exactly. There are other characters who have been shape-shifters and things like that, but

the shrinking concept is a hallowed tradition in motion pictures, from *The Incredible Shrinking Man* to *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids*. It's a very science fiction concept. We certainly thought about it as a superhero movie but also as a science fiction film, as a shrinking movie. That's his primary power, so how are we going to visualise that in amazing new, inventive ways with the technology that we have? Then again our secret weapon is his other power, the ability to control ants... That's the one that's intriguing to me. With Ant-Man and the Hulk you really understand how those powers are powerful. With Ant-Man it's, “Oh, he can shrink! That's cool, I get that! And... he can control ants?! Well, what's that going to do?” One of the things I loved in the comics, and even more so in our movie, is that we're going to show the audiences full-on how that power is cool, and how those armies of ants can be marshalled into doing amazing things.

Does that feel like a hard sell?

I don't think it's necessarily a hard sell, but

"I ALWAYS LIKED THE WAY ANT-MAN WAS AN UNDERDOG"



"Hello - I'm your new pal."



Evangeline Lilly, Paul Rudd and Michael Douglas bring considerable star power.



Mission: get down the plughole!

like the Ant-Man suit itself it's a little bit of a stealth technology. I think people will come to *Ant-Man* only thinking about the shrinking, and it's the other power that's really going to sneak up on them. The way that we've visualised it means that when they leave the movie they'll be like, "Oh, wow - that's really cool." It's absolutely unique to Ant-Man and different to any other superhero that's appeared in the MCU.

You found yourself stepping into a project that was essentially Edgar Wright's baby. Was that a tough choice for you?

Initially I thought, "Well, here's a project that somebody else has developed off and on for a number of years. And I don't want to be involved in any movie that I can't make my own." Not out of a place of ego but as a comic book nerd. I have my own special relationship with the character of Ant-Man. I have my own thoughts about what I like and don't like about

that character and what I think the tone of the movie should be. And then when I came in and met with Marvel and read the existing drafts and talked to them about the visualisation of the movie, that got me excited. This was a thing that was too good an opportunity to pass up. Any drama that had happened on *Ant-Man* far preceded me. All I knew is now there's no director on this movie, and I want to do it.

So it never felt like a poisoned chalice?

Not at all. I'm a fan of Edgar's and I liked the script that he and Joe [Cornish] had written. There were a bunch of different drafts and certainly there's a lot that's

made it into the movie, particularly the major decision to make it about Hank Pym passing the torch to Scott Lang, and also the fact that it's a heist movie structure. But we made some substantial changes when Adam McKay came on and wrote the newer drafts with Paul Rudd. I feel absolute ownership over this movie.

It's an effects intensive film, so obviously there's plenty of opportunity for spectacle. But how do the effects service the story?

The story is everything in these movies. They used to be the exception, these giant blockbuster visual effects extravaganzas. There's no denying that now there's a glut of these kind of movies in the landscape. And a lot of those movies - the ones that in my personal opinion don't work - are the ones that value visual effects over character and story. This movie was all about the character. At its core, in addition to being a sci-fi conceit and a heist movie structure, it's about these dual father-daughter stories, these fathers ➔



Expect some "ant's-eye view" shots...

who have made mistakes in their lives and are trying to reconcile their relationships with their daughters. There's a serious dramatic conceit at the centre of that, and the emotionality of that was important to me too. The effects absolutely serve the story in that regard.

All of these movies are powered by their central performances. What does Paul Rudd bring to *Ant-Man*?

Having Paul Rudd play Scott Lang separates it instantly from any of the other Marvel movies. Now you're dealing with a guy who doesn't inherently have superpowers. It's all about the suit. And also the fact that he's a father. He's the only hero in the MCU that has to deal with having a child. How does that complicate matters for him as a hero? Scott Lang in the movie is a pretty normal guy. He's made terrible decisions in his past and when you first meet him he's just coming out of prison. Rudd to me is the kind of actor I love working with. He's probably now mostly known for his comedy but you can't forget that he's an



You'll believe a man can be the size of an ant.

CONSIDER THE ANT

Amazing ant-based pub-fact ammo!

Ants are as old as the dinosaurs, dating to the early Cretaceous period, roughly 130 million years ago. One fossilised queen ant was 6cm long, with a wingspan of 15cm.

Ants are farmers, with complex agricultural systems, established millions of years before humans began farming.

Ants are also slavemasters, keeping

members of rival ant species captive to do their bidding.

The muscle ratio of ants allows them to carry objects up to 50 times their own body weight. If human muscle ratio was the same we'd be able to lift cars.

Step on an ant and it'll release an emergency pheromone that will send nearby ants into an attack frenzy.

Ants can transmit and receive signals through the touch of their antennae.

A queen ant can live for up to 30 years.

Some communities of ants can reach across thousands of miles. One supercolony stretches over three continents. Brrr.

Ants are an SF staple: HG Wells had them menacing humankind in

1905's *The Empire Of The Ants* (filmed in 1977 with added Joan Collins). Giant, radioactive ants stalked the New Mexico desert in 1954's *Them!*. One draft of the fourth Indy film was titled *Indiana Jones And The Atomic Ants...*



incredibly skilled dramatic actor. He's also the kind of actor who's willing to jump in and do everything. He got into incredible shape for the movie and did all the fight training. And he worked on the script with Adam McKay. He's one of the screenwriters of our movie, so he knows the story inside and out.

You have Evangeline Lilly as your female lead, Hope Pym.

I've been a fan of Evangeline since *Lost*. She's such a strong presence in the movie. The story is as much hers as it is Paul Rudd's and Michael Douglas's story. She's a complicated character and has a lot of unresolved issues with her dad, with Hank Pym. Her arc in the story is really crucial, because there's a part of her that feels like she deserves to be the person who is leading the charge here. And there are certain things in her life that have to be resolved before she's able to step up and be a hero. And Evangeline, in addition to being beautiful, is an incredibly skilled actress, and – almost even more so than Paul – when she got



Corey Stoll plays Ant-Man's nemesis, Yellowjacket.



Now that's gotta be fun.

"MARVEL IS AWARE OF THE DANGER OF REPEATING THEMSELVES"

with the fight trainers, she dug in. I would not want to go toe-to-toe with Evangeline Lilly in a boxing ring!

We hear she's been testing really well with women in the audience.

Having strong female characters in a movie is really important to me. *Down With Love*, my second movie, is all about that. It's all about the inequality of the workplace, and one woman's attempt to subvert the male-

dominated workplace in the '60s. In this genre of movie it's starting to be talked about more and more, and rightfully so, that there need to be more female heroes in this arena.

You've got Yellowjacket as a foe, who was traditionally a hero in the comics. Why the choice to make him the villain in this?

In the comics Yellowjacket was originally Hank Pym. And Hank Pym had what one might call a touch of schizophrenia. He was Ant-Man, he was Giant-Man, he was Goliath, he was Yellowjacket, he was briefly Wasp, and then he was back to Ant-Man. When it came time to do the movie I think the feeling was well, why not take Yellowjacket which is, design-wise, amazingly cool. And it just made sense for the cinematic version to use this character, Darren Cross, who existed in the comics – he was the villain in Scott Lang's first appearance in *Marvel Premiere* issue 47. It made sense to create a version where he was Pym's protégé, and had inklings of this buried Ant-Man technology that Hank wouldn't necessarily share with him. Now he's on his own and free to replicate and maybe even

better this technology, but for the absolute opposite reasons that Hank Pym did. You do kind of see Darren Cross's point of view. You see what it is that made him become so resentful of Hank Pym and what led him down this really dark path.

This is a movie that ultimately has to be part of the Marvel machine. Is it a challenge to keep this film's voice distinct and still be part of that juggernaut?

It's interesting. You were asking about my decision-making process to come on this film. One of the things in the back of my mind was that these movies are huge, and extremely successful, and Marvel clearly has a way of doing things. What's it going to be like to step into that environment? I'm really pleased to report that not only do they allow idiosyncratic choices but they really encourage it, because no one is more aware of the danger of repeating themselves than Marvel. The cool thing about this universe – which obviously parallels the Marvel comics universe that I grew up with – is that you can create this larger universe that encompasses all these heroes, but also encompasses all these radically different tones. And to me that's kind of the equivalent of the comics world, where the artist who was drawing *The Avengers* was very different to the artist who was drawing *Hulk*, who was different from the artist drawing *Iron Man* – and yet these characters could all show up in each other's comic titles. It's astounding – and now almost seems like a no-brainer, because they've done it so well. But ten years ago it was almost unheard of. [Marvel] say, "Let's make *Ant-Man* as distinctive and different as we can." I always look back at last year, 2014 – they released *Winter Soldier* and they released *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. And I love both of those movies, but they could not be more tonally different. And they both succeed on their own and they both succeed as parts of that larger universe.

And *Winter Soldier* is so different to the first *Captain America* movie...

Yeah, and that's amazing, because I love the first Cap – it's a full-on WW2 period, straight-faced movie, and then you take that same character and you put him in this contemporary environment and it's a radically different tone, it's like a '70s political thriller. They're psyched to do that, it's what they live for. And with the stuff I've seen from *Civil War* that's another thing altogether...

So could an *Ant-Man* sequel have an equally different tone?

I would be wide open, if we were fortunate enough to make a sequel to *Ant-Man*, to throw everything out of the window and go for a different tone. It'd be great! 

Ant-Man opens on 17 July.

Evangeline Lilly

The *Lost* and *Hobbit* star enters the Marvel Universe in *Ant-Man*...

WORDS BY JOSEPH MCCABE PORTRAIT BY CHRIS NICHOLLS

Evangeline Lilly never set out to be an actress, booking her first gigs as a means of paying her college tuition. But after working as an uncredited extra on shows like *Smallville* and *Tru Calling*, she found a calling of her own, and a legion of fans, after being cast as fugitive-turned-heroine Kate Austen; a role she played through all six seasons of TV's phenomenally successful *Lost*. After taking some time off to have a baby, Lilly saw her big-screen career blossom with her turn opposite Hugh Jackman in *Real Steel* and as elf warrior Tauriel in director Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* movies. A newcomer to the world of comic books, Lilly joins the Marvel Universe with this summer's *Ant-Man*, in which she plays Hope van Dyne, the daughter of Henry Pym and Janet van Dyne – best known to fans as the original Ant-Man and Wasp.

Hope van Dyne isn't quite as well known as some of the other characters in the Marvel Universe. Was the chance to develop something new part of the role's appeal?

Yeah, definitely. What I really took my cue from was [original director] Edgar Wright. Of course Hope van Dyne has roots in the comics world, but she wasn't a fully fleshed-out character. Edgar had a very specific vision for her. I really liked the idea of this female character who was very serious, very cold and detached, but capable of anything. There's a bit of ambiguity to her. Is she a good person? Is she a bad person? There's a lot of questions that surround her. I love the challenge of trying to play that ambiguity. I hope like hell I pull it off [laughs].

Did Hope change once Edgar left the project and Peyton Reed took the helm?

When the split happened, I was just starting to work with Edgar, saying, "Okay, what about her heart? What about her emotions? What about the baggage she's

been carrying around her whole life having been raised by these two crazy superheroes?" Because I

"I'm crossing my fingers that Marvel ask me back to do more movies"

was working through some of those issues I hadn't signed my contract. I was very honest with Marvel that I would not sign if I didn't feel comfortable with the next person that they brought on board to replace Edgar. So when Peyton came on, he and I had a very fast and furious conversation up front. I said, "It's really important to me that she be very three-dimensional and that we not get stuck in a kind of comic-book prototype of a woman. How do we find room in this already very jam-packed script to bring out those moments?" The things he was able to offer were meaningful. Peyton was a really great director to work for as a woman and work with on my female character.

Hope's a unique heroine in the Marvel Cinematic Universe in that she begins by training Scott Lang to become a superhero.

Yeah, I was excited by the concept of the role when I first read it because of that aspect. She really is a reluctant mentor. She's a bitter, angry woman; who, despite herself, is working to help someone who she thinks is an idiot [laughs] come into himself and figure out how to rise to the challenge that is before him and become Ant-Man. I love that reluctance. Often I think I've played characters who were tough but they're very gentle and caring. It was actually fun for me to try on a character who was actually very cold and often impatient and kind of rude [laughs]. She's an original to the Marvel Universe, and of course I'm thrilled to be in good company with Scarlett Johansson as one of the kick-ass females in this universe. And I've heard the reactions that have come back from test groups, that women walk away from watching this movie and there's sort of this wonderful satisfaction where they're saying, "Well, it's about time," that they feel represented. I'm honoured to be able to play a role where women, their authenticity and their strength, are being represented in the superhero universe.

Would you like to see Hope eventually take on the mantle of the Wasp and join the Avengers?

I would love to see that... Hope's a very, very capable, intelligent, and, to a certain extent, lethal woman; even in her own right, without any superhero powers. There is that element that she is the Wasp's daughter, and a chance to create that is fun. As far as the plans for her going forward... I think everyone who signs on with Marvel has to sign a multi-picture deal. I'm just crossing my fingers that that turns into something, that they ask me back and that I have to do more movies [laughs].

Were you exposed to much of the Marvel Universe when you were growing up?

None at all. I had no interest in comic books growing up. Because it just didn't seem like my kind of thing. But one of the things I'm learning through my career is that often things that don't seem like my kind of thing turn out to be my kind of thing. What I recognised is that... When I was a little girl I was really into fantasy, but I don't think I ever identified with that. Some kids in school wear that as a badge – it's within their identity, they're sci-fi/fantasy nerds. I was never that kind.

But looking back on the things that I loved, I loved fantasy. So it is really fun for me to get involved with projects where I get a chance to slip into worlds where the rules of normal human living don't apply [laughs].

Ant-Man opens on Friday 17 July.



CHRIS NICHOLLS/CONTOUR BY GETTY



S

TAN LEE ALWAYS HAD

an allergy to understatement.

Grab any early issue of *Fantastic Four* and you'll see the words "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" slapped above

the title logo. These comics may have been the crude, raw matter of the nascent Marvel Universe but Lee's boast was more than just carnival barker hype. Teamed with artist Jack Kirby he unleashed a riot of page-melting imagination that powered a groundbreaking run of stories, cornerstone of the superhero craze that dominates today's cinema screens.

We're still waiting for The World's Greatest Fantastic Four Film. Hollywood folklore insists a Marvel exec ritually torched the unreleased master print of 1993's micro-budget embarrassment from exploitation king Roger Corman. Chris Columbus's blockbuster vehicle for Dennis Quaid and Meg Ryan only exists in the Odeon of your dreams, playing on a double-bill with Peyton Reed's 1960s-set version. Tim Story's bright, goofy pair of mid-noughties *FF* movies actually made it to the screen but failed to ignite with fans.

BIGGER, BOLDER, DARKER

Now Twentieth Century Fox is taking another stab at nailing the *Fantastic Four*. And this may be the boldest take yet, a darker, more grounded, altogether more unnerving riff on Lee and Kirby's quartet of heroes.

"One of the things we kept talking about was the word fantastic," says Simon Kinberg, the film's screenwriter and producer. "The previous movies had treated fantastic as a synonym for excellent or awesome. And we wanted to treat it more like when the word fantastic means fantastical, which is more science fiction, more horror to some extent. The way it was used in early genre literature was almost always in the scary sense of the fantastical. And that was a guiding principle for us."

A core creative in Fox's reborn *X-Men* franchise, Kinberg joined the project on the strength of director Josh Trank's initial concept. Trank's breakthrough hit was 2012's *Chronicle*, an edgy, found-footage spin on the superhero myth. He had an equally radical vision for Marvel's founding family. Superpowers? Try "aggressively abnormal physical conditions".

"He had such a clear idea of how to make it fresh and relevant and modern without betraying what was classical about the comic books that I got off the phone with him and called the studio and said 'I'm in,'" Kinberg tells *SFX*. "It was a stripped-down, emotional, relatable version of the *Fantastic Four*. He said – and this was emblematic of the whole approach – that when they are transformed ➔

POWER

So will the Four finally get a *Fantastic* film? Nick Setchfield talks to the writer/producer

STRUGGLE

IMAGES COURTESY XXX XXX

and given their powers, instead of treating it like it's a gift, like they suddenly have superpowers that they can go and utilise, it's a curse. It's how we'd all feel if suddenly our bodies caught on fire uncontrollably or we couldn't control the elasticity of our limbs, or we turned into a rock creature or we couldn't control our own invisibility. It would be terrifying. It would be a massive transition, a traumatic transition in our lives. And he wanted to explore that. I'd never really seen that done in any superhero movie."

LIGHT AND DARK

Trank's *Fantastic Four* draws inspiration from equally unexpected sources. "The references he kept using were movies like *Close Encounters* and *ET* and David Cronenberg movies. Even though they were quite distinct from the comic and very different from the movies that had preceded it, it felt correct for the franchise. It didn't feel like he was trying to twist it into something that it wasn't."

The movie's marketing has positioned it at the bleaker end of the superhero spectrum. The first trailer traded the pop-art optimism of the original comics for a grim, Nolaesque tone and sombre, dystopian hues. Kinberg agrees that this is a darker, grittier take but argues that there's light in there too.

"It's not a dour film," he stresses. "It just treats it all a little more seriously than we've seen before. There's still humour in the movie, and a lot of heart. One of the things that we embraced from the original comics that now seems sort of quaint but back in the day was pretty bold was the way they used science. They treated science like being a scientist was a heroic act. It was cutting-edge science. It was this moment in time around the space race where the world looked at scientists as leaders. We're in that era again – it's not space but it's the internet, it's new technology. We wanted to make it feel that



JAMIE BELL
BEN GRIMM

► "I'm the muscle, but I'm definitely also the heart. The Thing carries a lot of the emotional weight of the group. When you think of the Thing, or the Hulk, you think of them as monsters. Josh said to me, 'think Edward Scissorhands, think of characters who are still real people with real feelings'."



"This is no cave."

science was real and bleeding-edge and next generation."

Kinberg claims that's not the only connection to the authentic spirit of Lee and Kirby. "We went back and looked at the original books and mined them for what we felt were the most integral parts of what defined the Fantastic Four. A lot of what Josh and I love about the Fantastic Four is the interpersonal family squabbles and that kind of humour, where it comes from the very mundane in the context of the fantastical. The reason that certain comic books penetrate the culture and remain favourites for decades is always the characters. And the Fantastic Four are no exception. They're just four wonderfully drawn characters who are easy corollaries for our real lives. So we get into sibling rivalry, we get into best friendship, we get into a burgeoning love story."

This team skews young, taking a cue from Marvel's *Ultimate Fantastic Four* title, the twentysomething-themed reboot that debuted in 2004. "When I came on to the movie Josh had made the decision to make it an origin story and make the Fantastic Four younger," says Kinberg, "partly following *Ultimate* and also because in many ways he saw this as a coming of age story, which it shares with *Chronicle*. And the FF's transformation, for him, was a literalisation of that coming of age. To make them older, in their thirties or forties, would have taken away from what he wanted to do dramatically."

Flaming on as Johnny Storm is *Chronicle*'s Michael B Jordan, a casting choice that shakes up the all-white status quo of the original comics. "The one person Josh knew he wanted to cast was Michael. They're close friends and he just saw him as Johnny. Funny, charming, moves fast, just a very electric person in real life and on screen. We wanted someone who could be a superhero, so you feel like there's a certain larger than life quality to them, but also someone who's able to play real, grounded drama."

"Miles Teller was the person that we were really passionate about for Reed. Again he's somebody who can be mischievous and playful – he's sort of irrepressible and there's a lot of that in the film – and yet also really



KATE MARA
SUE STORM

► "First and foremost, Sue is a pretty brilliant scientist. But she's also pretty sarcastic. She's got a great sense of humour and I think that's the thing that especially connects her with Reed. There are no sidekicks in this movie, the Fantastic Four is a unit, and they're only at their best when they're together."



"It's dlobberin' time!"



MILES TELLER REED RICHARDS

► “When we meet them, they’re really just kids, they think they’re untouchable... and this accident changes everything. They lose their innocence. Reed blames himself, I think. It’s hard for him when he looks at his best friend and his best friend is a rock creature for the rest of his life...”

heavy and intense. For Sue we wanted someone who was a little more mature than the other characters. It was important for us to cast someone who felt like she was legitimately a brilliant physicist and potentially even smarter than Reed. We looked at a lot of actresses who had that level of innate intelligence. Kate Mara’s somebody I’ve been a fan of for a long time.

“And then Ben was an interesting one,” Kinberg continues, recalling the search for an actor who could embody the rock-bound soul of Benjamin J Grimm aka the Thing, the mighty orange fists of the foursome. “The initial instinct was to cast a big, burly guy, as it’s been depicted in the past. We met with a bunch of those actors. And then Jamie Bell’s name came up and suddenly it became more interesting to cast against type and start with someone who’s not massive in size but who becomes massive, so the transformation’s even more dramatic in his life. Jamie has this tough, working class background – we’d seen him do it in *Billy Elliot* – so we felt like he’d be an interesting choice.”

“WE WANTED TO STAY TRUE TO THE OPTIMISM OF THE ORIGINAL BOOKS”



MICHAEL B JORDAN JOHNNY STORM

► “Johnny is charismatic. He’s impatient. He’s eager. But he’s still trying to find himself. I was a diehard fan of the comics before I signed on and I wanted it to be done the right way. The old *FF* movies are cool, but I think they were good for the audience at *that* moment. I feel like people are looking for a little bit more grit nowadays.”

The four face down Toby Kebbell as essential *FF* foe Doctor Doom. “Toby was someone we’d looked at for *X-Men* movies in the past and he fitted really nicely into Victor. We wanted to use Doom because he’s the classic nemesis and also because we liked the idea of starting the movie with a bunch of characters who were friends. They could almost have been the *Fantastic Five* if circumstances had gone differently. There was something really interesting about that, and emotional.”

Kinberg knows that this fearlessly 21st century take on a beloved comic book is a controversial proposition for some fans. “Yeah, I think it’s been a harder sell because the hardcore fans were not wild about the previous incarnations. So you always have to convince them that we’re doing something different than what they’ve seen before. And *Fantastic Four* is also, I believe a fundamentally difficult comic to adapt to a modern tone and a modern world. The fans are waiting to see what we do with it.

“The powers are tricky to render with visual effects – creating a rock creature who’s still dimensional and emotional has up until this point been very challenging. We really did a lot of research and development before we started making the movie to make sure that we’d be able to do justice to the Thing and not make him feel like he was either a cartoon or a suit like in the other movies. The same is true of Reed’s

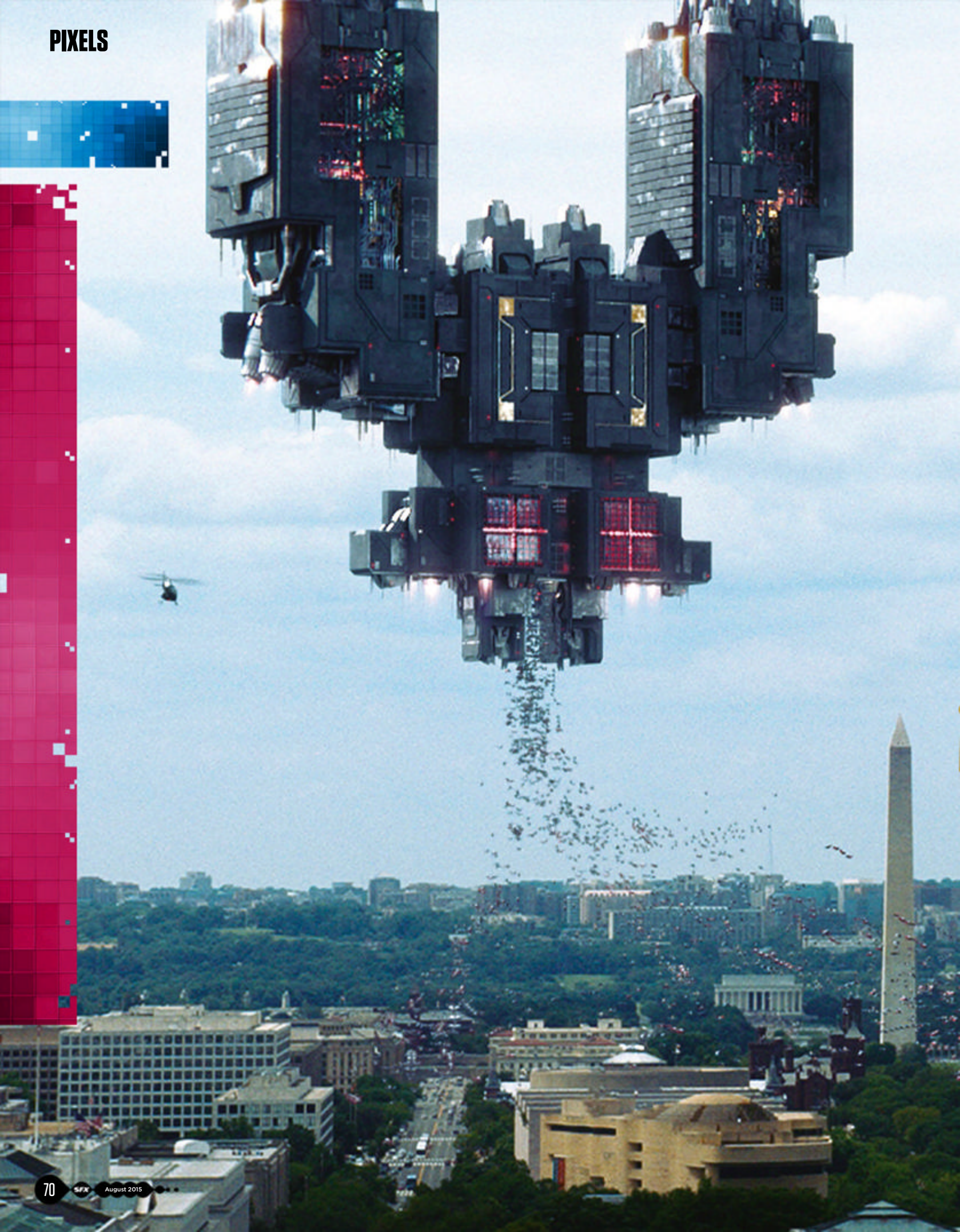
stretching ability – that’s a very challenging power to render. And then on the tonal side the original comics very much have the voice and tone of the era in which they were created. We wanted to stay true to a lot of the optimism of the original books and the aspirational quality of them, but we also wanted to modernise it. You want to be careful and respectful but also create a movie that is a great movie for audiences that may be meeting the *Fantastic Four* for the first time.”

Fox has faith. *Fantastic Four 2* is already scheduled for summer 2017. The World’s Greatest Sequel? We’ll see.

“We’ve been talking a lot about it,” teases Kinberg. “I think the biggest question – and this is the way I approach all these movies – is ‘What’s the next stage in the evolution of these characters?’ And at the end of this movie – I don’t want to give it away! – they’re at the

place where they’re starting to embrace and accept who they are. And so the next movie would be the complexities of what it is to now be living with these powers in the real world. It’s almost like if this is a coming of age story for these characters, the next movie is about what it is to be a grown-up in the world...”

Fantastic Four opens on 6 August.



SPACE INVADERS

SHOVE OFF, ULTRON. DO ONE, INDOMINUS REX. THIS SUMMER'S BIGGEST THREAT TO THE PLANET IS... PAC-MAN? JORDAN FARLEY GOES BEHIND THE SCENES OF *PIXELS* WITH DIRECTOR CHRIS COLUMBUS

NOSTALGIA IS A POWERFUL tool for any filmmaker. Han Solo uttering three words at the end of the second *Force Awakens* trailer and reducing emotionally balanced adults to blubbering wrecks is proof of that. Action comedy *Pixels* is tugging on those same nostalgia strings; partly by bringing beloved gaming icons from many a childhood to the big screen for the first time, and partly by harkening back to a lost period of filmmaking – the Amblin classics of the mid-'80s.

"It wasn't a sense of nostalgia for the characters that drew me to the film, it was a sense of nostalgia for the style of those Amblin movies – creating that feeling again in a movie theatre," says director Chris Columbus, a key player in Amblin's golden age himself having written *Gremlins*, *The Goonies* and *Young Sherlock Holmes*. "People seem to be clamouring for it. We have a very specific, well-defined PG-13 now. If you look at the PG movies of the '80s, we got away with a lot that doesn't happen anymore. That was my intention – to create a film that had the feeling of the summer of 1985."

But if *Pixels* is tonally tethered to 1985,

narratively it's anchored to 1982, with the film's army of voxellated antagonists hailing from games found in arcades across America during that year. Having captured the cultural zeitgeist, footage of *Donkey Kong*, *Pac-Man*, *Galaga* and more is bungled into a time capsule and sent into space, only to be intercepted by unfriendly ETs 33 years later and mistaken for a declaration of war. Never ones to pass up an opportunity for poetic justice (apparently), the extraterrestrials invade by assuming the form of our own digital creations.

It's a concept that expands on the superb 2010 short "Pixels" by Patrick Jean. The short caught the attention of Adam Sandler and his production company Happy Madison, who acquired the rights and started developing a script within weeks of "Pixels" appearing online. An unrelated meeting between Columbus and Sandler while the script was being thrashed out by Timothy Dowling and Tim Herlihy quickly led to Columbus signing on for the project.

"I had a meeting with Sandler. We hit it off, and as I was leaving he said to take a look at this script he'd been working on for some time," Columbus recalls. "I read it on a plane, fell in love with it and thought: 'It's a unique

summer film. It's not a superhero film, it's not a sequel.' So I said, 'I want to do it.' The look of the short and the concept of the short was the starting point for us. We're adding a lot more detail and a lot more character."

GAME ON

Sandler and several other cast members, including Peter Dinklage, spent their summer holidays dropping quarters into arcade cabinets in the '80s (the Electric Dream Factory arcade from *Pixels* is named after Sandler's childhood haunt) but Columbus came to the project with mostly fresh eyes.

"I fell in love with the movie because of the concept and the ability to create incredible, →



Earth's saviours Michelle Monaghan, Adam Sandler, Josh Gad and Peter Dinklage.

The attacking aliens are actually composed of voxels, not pixels...



dangerous, edgy, kind of loveable versions of these game characters," Columbus says. "When my wife and I were dating in the '80s, we played *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong* at bars. I didn't play the upright arcade games, I played the tabletop games. So I knew those pretty well but I had to go back and revisit things like *Centipede* and *Galaga* and *Breakout* and *Q*bert*. Those games I had to relearn – which was great. I'd rather be researching videogames than Winston Churchill!"

Columbus also cites the prospect of doing something new visually as a big draw. "I watched the short and thought, 'I've never seen special effects like that.' I hired my visual effects advisor, Matthew Butler after he created this short video of a giant Pac-Man eating through a school bus. What I was intrigued by was when Pac-Man ate through it, the school bus itself would be voxelised, and everything that came in contact with Pac-Man had this odd cube-like quality. In other words, it wasn't your normal summer movie destruction. I thought, 'You really will be able to do something that just freaks out the audience.'

"I also liked the concept of seeing these kids, these four videogame champions who were at the top of the world in 1982, when they've grown up. One grows up to be President, but he's the worst at videogames. The other kids, their lives are in turmoil. They've grown up to be losers."

MULTI-PLAYER

Those losers are led by Sandler's Sam Brenner – *Pac-Man* World Champion 1982; Microwave Dinner World Champion 2015. After the



Will Q*bert out-act Adam Sandler?

aliens invade, the military find themselves hopelessly outmatched and unable to adapt to the invaders' fast-paced, game-mimicking attack patterns. Brenner and his nimble-fingered childhood acquaintances are brought in and outfitted as the Arcaders to employ the skills that saw them top High Score boards 30 years earlier. Also part of the Arcader line-up are Brenner's nemesis Eddie Plant (Dinklage), conspiracy theorist Ludlow Lamonsoff (Josh Gad), President of the United States Will Cooper (Kevin James) and Michelle Monaghan's DARPA weapon specialist Violet Van Patten, who develops cannons capable of destroying the light-based entities. Once again the action hinges on an event in 1982.

"Back in 1982, which is where we start the film, Sam and Eddie competed in the final of the World Videogame Championship playing *Donkey Kong*," Columbus explains. "The outcome of that particular event wasn't a good experience for Sam. So Sam's really disliked and has an intense dislike for Eddie, which he's held onto for all these years. So when they're back together, there's a good deal of conflict and anger and antagonism."

It's no coincidence that the pair compete over Nintendo's beloved barrel-jumping arcade game with the egotistical, mullet-sporting Eddie bearing a striking resemblance to 2007 documentary *The King Of Kong's* Billy Mitchell. "It's unlike any other performance by anyone I've ever seen," Columbus enthuses. "It's just a joy to watch on screen, because he takes this role to some crazy places. He's been in prison for nine years at the start of the movie and he has some unique prison-

"IT'S THE WORLD OF GREMLINS AND THE GOONIES"





LEVEL UP

Visual Effects Supervisor Matthew Butler on bringing arcade icons to the big screen



DONKEY KONG

“We’re in a 3D world and these games only lived in a 2D world. Donkey Kong [only had] a few poses and he just flipped between them. Everyone would have felt shorted if we took it too literally, so we found a hybridised solution where he’s continuously animated but we make it so you get those characteristic poses a lot of the time.”



PAC-MAN

“The script talks about how these alien life forms are based on light energy. When Pac-Man engulfs the fire truck in New York, as his lips touch truck the cubes inherit the properties that the local object has, so if Pac-Man’s biting a bit of a red enamel fire truck then that cube becomes a red enamel cube. It creates a more interesting graphic visual effect.”



CENTIPEDE

“When we first attacked the Centipede I figured we’d make this Creature from the Black Lagoon sort of thing and Chris didn’t want that. He was like, “This is a comedy. These creatures need humour. It’s what they do that makes them terrifying.” And that’s when you get that juxtaposition: “Aw, look at Pac-Man... Oh my god he’s just bit my arm off!”



SPACE INVADERS

“With *Space Invaders* the frequency and speed of motion is as important as the colour and shape. If they were just sat there you wouldn’t necessarily recognise them, but when they make that staccato jump and stagger down you recognise it. Once you’ve done that you can have a UFO doing [more] things because you’ve bought into the notion of it.”



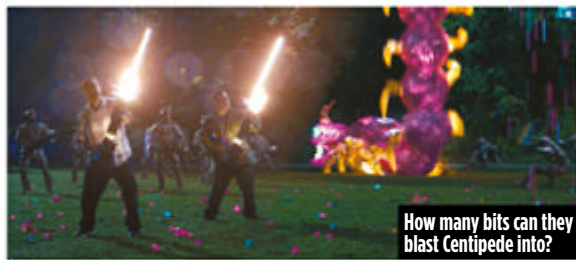
Pac-Man bites back...



There are still sponsorship opportunities at the end of the world!



Watch out, Pac-Man has quite a hunger.



How many bits can they blast Centipede into?

inspired action. It’s just delicious when he appears on screen.”

Even more unusual than casting heroic pill-muncher Pac-Man as the bad guy, infamous Mall Cop Kevin James plays the leader of the free world in *Pixels*. “Kevin usually plays much more comedic, broader roles but I thought: ‘There’s a guy who’s got a real strength about him.’ Columbus says. “On one of the first days we were shooting he was at a desk and being very Presidential and strong. It reminded me a little of Al Capone, which is an odd connection. It’s a completely different role for Kevin. He really took on the challenge.”

If the idea of Adam Sandler and Kevin James reuniting on the big screen has set alarm bells ringing worry not, because Columbus is keen to stress that the film couldn’t be further away from a typical Happy Madison production. “It has nothing to do with that world. It’s the world of *Gremlins*, *The Goonies*, and a little bit of *Potter* thrown in.” While Sandler himself adds, “It is a different genre and a different feel and it’s a different relationship for us. It’s not *Chuck And Larry*, it’s something else. We’re very excited.”

SUPER BREAKOUT

But the real stars of the show, of course, are the Pixels. Among the film’s major setpieces are a Pac attack on the streets of New York City (complete with colour-coded minis doubling for Blinky, Inky, Pinky and Clyde), a Centipede assault over Hyde Park and a

climactic multi-character battle on the streets of Washington, though you can expect plenty of cameos, with everyone from Q*bert to the Duck Hunt Dog putting in an appearance.

“There’s a sweetness and an innocence and a cuteness to those characters in their 8-bit way,” Columbus says. “But when they suddenly become 25ft tall and they start destroying the city, that edginess, that darkness – which has really been part of my life since *Gremlins* – comes to the fore. I really responded to the idea that these adorable characters could suddenly become vicious, terrifying creatures. And the whole concept that if the Centipede or Pac-Man bites your arm your entire arm becomes pixelated – it just crumbles – that was a unique way of attacking people, buses, buildings, mailboxes...”

With ‘80s nostalgia manifesting, more often than not, in the form of unnecessary reboots and remakes, *Pixels* is satisfying cravings for the decade in a different way – by bottling the spirit of the era but creating something fresh.

“It’s a love letter to the ‘80s,” Columbus says with sincerity. “We’ll have a score that sounds like it could have been from an ‘80s Amblin film. We’ll have a certain anamorphic widescreen look that will feel particularly like the pictures I was involved with – something like *The Goonies* or *Gremlins*, a lot of the other Amblin pictures like *Back To The Future*. We’re really going for that sort of vibe.” **SFX**

Pixels opens on Wednesday 12 August.



20

THE
GREATEST BOOKS OF SFX'S LIFETIME
YEARS

Only 20?... In the last of our celebratory 20/20 features looking back at two decades of *SFX*, Jonathan Wright runs down the best of SFF literature

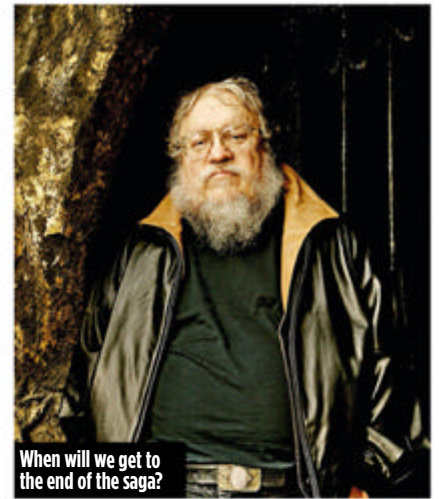
#sfx20

SELECTING OUR FAVOURITE NOVELS of *SFX*'s lifetime is of course a completely ridiculous task. An impossible mission, you might say. Just look at who we've left out – Philip Pullman, Christopher Priest, Justina Robson and so many others. So how have we arrived at the 20 books featured here? Simply, we've tried, as far as possible, to choose books that are not only fabulous novels that should be in any definitive science fiction and fantasy collection, but which in some sense represent how SFF literature has evolved over the past two decades – and it certainly has evolved over that time. Or, sometimes, books where an author has suddenly changed everything by challenging existing assumptions. Of course you may not agree with our choices, but we did our best and we humbly offer our selection anyway. Now, let the arguments begin...

EXCESSION IAIN M BANKS, 1996

When Iain Banks revealed himself as Iain M Banks, unapologetic SF novelist, it was genuinely shocking. That genre novels are today treated more seriously outside the SF community has much to do with Banks' *Culture* novels, set on the edges of a utopian civilisation made up of post-humans and Minds, super-powerful AIs. *Excession* is one of his best, a fearless novel of ideas that takes a generic space opera plot, the appearance of a mysterious alien artefact, and twists it into something rich and strange.





When will we get to the end of the saga?

A GAME OF THRONES GEORGE R.R. MARTIN, 1996



When the first novel in the *Song of Ice and Fire* sequence hit bookstores, it was George R.R. Martin's first full-length novel for 13 years. This gap was a reflection of the way

Martin's career had faltered in the wake of the failure of *The Armageddon Rag* (1983). Riffing off the Wars of the Roses, Martin hooked readers via brilliant characters and complex storylines, and re-energised epic fantasy too.

HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE JK ROWLING, 1997



It's easy to be snuffy about the boy wizard, to see his adventures as dull boarding school fodder jazzed up with a bit of magic. And yet as anyone who has ever read one of the novels to

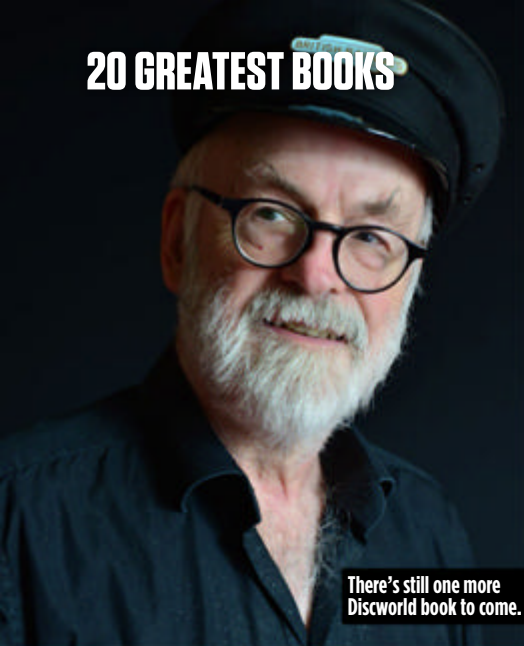
a child will testify, the magic here lies not in the descriptions of spell casting, but in the combination of what's-going-to-happen-next? plotting and characters you grow to love. Not convinced? You're an uber-muggle and there's no hope for you.

PERDIDO STREET STATION CHINA MIÉVILLE, 2000



The new weird didn't really exist as a coherent literary movement, so it's somehow strangely appropriate that it nevertheless casts such a shadow over contemporary

SFF. As for its key text, look no further than China Miéville's first Bas-Lag novel, a dark fantasy that owes debts to Mervyn Peake, steampunk, HP Lovecraft and the 1960s new wave, yet transcends these influences.



There's still one more Discworld book to come.

LIGHT M JOHN HARRISON, 2002

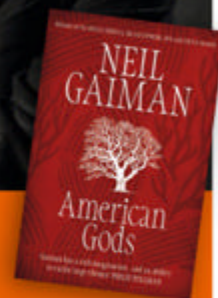


In the words of Iain M Banks in his *Guardian* review, *Light* is "a novel of full-spectrum literary dominance". To which we'd add that 1960s new wave veteran M John Harrison's

book is the best sci-fi novel of *SFX*'s lifetime, an unsettling tale where the sheer strangeness of the Kefahuchi Tract, "a singularity without an event horizon", constantly looms and you find yourself empathising with a physicist, Michael Kearney, who's also a serial killer.



This man has also edited *SFX*!



AMERICAN GODS NEIL GAIMAN, 2001

Neil Gaiman has long been concerned with the nature of gods. How do they come into being? What are they like? How do the actions and attitudes of humankind affect them? As its title suggests, these themes are explicit in *American Gods*, a novel that imagines a clash between old and new deities, and also serves as an eerie exploration of the 21st-century American psyche. To be read in conjunction with Terry Pratchett's *Small Gods* and the novel the two men wrote together, *Good Omens*.

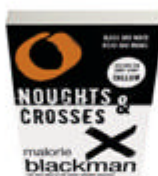
NIGHT WATCH TERRY PRATCHETT, 2002



When publisher Sam Jordison recently asked *Guardian* readers to nominate a *Discworld* novel to peruse along with *The Colour Of Magic* for its reading group, *Night Watch*

easily won out. Why? Perhaps because it's the *Discworld* novel where Pratchett's recurring moral concerns around how to live well seem most personally aligned with a much-loved character – time-travelling copper Sam Vimes. A wonderful book.

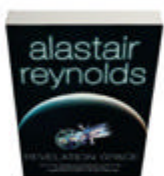
NOUGHTS AND CROSSES MALORIE BLACKMAN, 2001



The 20 years of *SFX*'s existence have coincided with an era when YA writers have often challenged adult assumptions about what kinds of subjects fiction

for adolescents should tackle. Enter Malorie Blackman OBE, whose dystopian *Noughts And Crosses* sequence tackles racism and slavery. It's also a considerable fantasy work, imagining a world where Africans gained a technological and political advantage over Europeans.

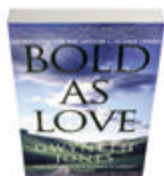
REVELATION SPACE ALASTAIR REYNOLDS, 2000



Brian Aldiss dubbed space opera "widescreen baroque". Heavily influenced by the new weird and cyberpunk, Alastair Reynolds re-engineered it as a kind

of widescreen gonzo grand guignol where grotesque things happen to morally ambiguous peoples. Science fiction really hasn't been the same since. *Revelation Space* was so dazzling it helped to persuade M John Harrison to return to space opera.

BOLD AS LOVE GWYNETH JONES, 2001



Its upbeat title may be borrowed from Jimi Hendrix, but there's little cheery about the world Gwyneth Jones describes in the first offering in her five-novel sequence of

things falling apart. A heady mix of Arthurian myth and grumpy naysaying that, to fine effect, flings the radical spirit of the late 1960s counterculture into the near future.

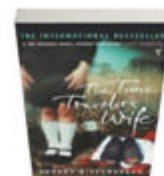
DEAD UNTIL DARK CHARLAINE HARRIS, 2001



When Charlaine Harris took the first of her Sookie Stackhouse novels to publishers, they weren't sure what to make of it. Here was a mix of horror, romance and mystery that

defied categorisation. (Even now, the term urban fantasy seems oddly inappropriate for novels so steeped in the southern US rural experience.) No matter, readers immediately connected with the telepathic waitress and Harris's fortune was made.

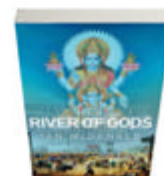
THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE AUDREY NIFFENEGGER, 2003



Like Billy Pilgrim in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Henry DeTamble is unstuck in time, likely at any moment to jump forward and back along

his own existence. But where Vonnegut used this premise as a way to explore the horrors of war, Niffenegger's novel is a genuinely touching meditation on love and romance.

RIVER OF GODS IAN McDONALD, 2004



For too many years, the futures conjured up by SF writers, at least those that have got attention in the US and Europe, have described western futures. For all it was written by a

pale-skinned chap in Belfast, *River Of Gods* – set in the balkanised India of 2047 – was key in opening up a space for Asian and African writers to tell audiences about their worlds.



True Blood added to her bank balance too.

JONATHAN STRANGE & MR NORRELL

SUSANNA CLARKE, 2004



After Neil Gaiman first read the then unpublished Susanna Clarke's fairytale "The Ladies Of Grace Adieu", he said, "It was like watching someone sit down to play the piano for the first time and she plays a sonata." Many had a similar experience reading her debut, and so far only, novel: how did a first-time novelist get to be *this good*? Whatever the answer, Clarke's take on English magic and mysticism, set in the Napoleonic era, is vivid and thrilling.

OSAMA

LAVIE TIDHAR, 2011



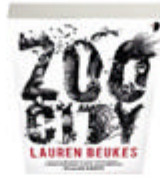
The set-up in Lavie Tidhar's best book to date is deceptively simple: in a world where global terrorism doesn't exist, a private detective, Joe, is hired to track down Mike Longshot, the author of books featuring one Osama bin Laden, vigilante. What follows is an exploration of the post-9/11 consciousness that fuses elements of film noir, alternate history and the airport thriller to glorious effect. A World Fantasy Award winner so unsettling that often-made comparisons with Philip K Dick don't seem at all fanciful.



Could Tidhar possibly be the new Philip K Dick?

ZOO CITY

LAUREN BEUKES, 2010



The novel that took the burgeoning new wave of non-European SF (for want of a snappier moniker) mainstream also announced the arrival of a major new talent. Lauren Beukes's second novel is the tale of Zinzi December, who has been "animalled" with a sloth familiar as the result of crimes committed in the past. Both a fantastical vision of a near-future Johannesburg, and a book rooted in deep anger at the inequalities of post-apartheid South Africa.



South Africa's most prominent SF writer.

QUICKSILVER

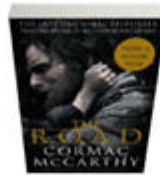
NEAL STEPHENSON, 2003



Stretching the definition of what constitutes sci-fi to breaking point, Neal Stephenson's *Quicksilver* is actually a novel set in the past, an epic of the enlightenment-era natural philosophers who invented the modern world. It's a measure of Stephenson's ambition that, even at 900-plus pages, it was the opening offering in a trilogy. It's historical fiction written with an SF sensibility, a brilliantly executed piece of history-of-science fiction.

THE ROAD

CORMAC MCCARTHY, 2006



Apocolit now... Whether thanks to zombie plagues, climate change or nuclear fallout, we've lately been assailed by novels about the end of the world. *The Road* stands far above most of these books for one primary reason: McCarthy isn't much interested in what might have brought about the end of civilisation, but instead unflinchingly shows us the human cost as a father struggles to protect his son. As readers, we guess from the off it's a hopeless task, which only heightens the horror.



Note how the cardie matches the cover...

ANCILLARY JUSTICE

ANN LECKIE, 2013

The debut from Ann Leckie took every major genre award going. Why? The novel's concern with gender politics, which chimed with an SF community (or at least a forward-looking part of it...) looking anew at issues here, certainly helped. But more than this, almost from the moment we meet Breq, a kind of AI fragment of a starship, it's clear Leckie's intention is to re-engineer space opera. The result is a novel that's challenging and ambitious, yet meticulously plotted and utterly absorbing.

THE WINDUP GIRL

PAOLO BACIGALUPI, 2009



In 1999, *The Matrix* effectively killed off cyberpunk by taking so many of its tropes mainstream and making them clichés in the process. Happily, it seems nobody told Paolo Bacigalupi, who a decade later updated the genre with his tale of life in 23rd-century Thailand, and grabbed himself Hugo, Nebula and John C Campbell Awards in the process. A novel that lingers in the imagination not just because it explores big ideas around biotech, but because Emiko, the "windup girl" herself, is such a memorable heroine.

Agree with our choices? Vote on the list at gamesradar.com/sfx-20.

Kim Stanley Robinson

The US novelist tells us why he's left the solar system behind with his latest novel...

WORDS BY JONATHAN WRIGHT PORTRAIT BY WILL IRELAND

Even if your back yard is as huge as the solar system, there comes a moment when you need not just to look over the fence, but to open the gate and explore what lies beyond. Figuratively, that's what Kim Stanley Robinson has done with his new novel, *Aurora*, his first science fiction novel set on a starship out in deep space, far beyond the warming glow of the Sun.

"I wanted to do what I usually do, take a common science fiction idea and push it to: what would that *really* be like if we did it?" Robinson says when *SFX* meets up with him in London.

Difficult is one answer that springs to mind – and not just because of the technical problems involved. In Robinson's scenario, humanity, or at least a section of it fascinated by travel between the stars, has decided to send settlers to the planetary system around

Tau Ceti, 11.9 light years away. Even in a craft covering 30,000 kilometres every second, this is a journey that takes around two centuries. It's a multi-generational undertaking with those who sign up for the journey also committing their own children to the enterprise.

"The starship literature is mostly by physics guys and it's mostly concentrated on propulsion, on how do we get it to go that fast, because that is a problem," says Robinson. "But what I was thinking was, 'Well what about biology, ecology, sociology, psychology?'"

Without underestimating our capacity for conflict, one answer here is that humankind, living in habitats that imitate ecologies found on Earth, might cope surprisingly well with living on a starship, especially those born en route. "Humans are so adaptable, you could think of an analogy as kids brought up in the middle of a city like London, an utterly and completely urban context," Robinson says. In other words, the environments with which we're most familiar become normal to us.

Except, of course, this isn't anything like a normal situation. As Robinson puts it in the novel, a ship travelling through space and attempting to maintain "a biologically closed life-support system" will inevitably be fighting "a rearguard battle" against entropy and

"We are on 'Starship Earth' and it needs to work for the generations to come"

dysfunction". And what happens if its passengers find their new home less than welcoming?

We're approaching spoiler territory now, but these are exceptional circumstances and one way Robinson conveys just how exceptional they are is by having much of the book narrated by the ship's AI. "It suddenly came to me that a starship would have to have a very, very powerful computer aboard running things, and if it were a quantum computer, as seems likely or at least possible, then this could be like the AI Pauline in *2312* [Robinson's Nebula-winning tale of tensions within a solar system-wide civilisation], saying things so interesting that it seems human, passes the Turing test," says Robinson. This, he adds, was his "way in to the book". It also makes the book distinctive, as we follow events from the perspective of a narrator that, at first at least, can't get its consciousness around the idea of storytelling.

As for Robinson's long-standing environmental concerns, they may not be as front and centre as usual, but they're certainly present, albeit more tangentially than in, say, the *Mars* trilogy, where a recurring theme is whether humankind has the right to terraform a pristine exo-wilderness. "It's interesting to think that we are on 'Starship Earth' and it needs to work for the generations to come; that it's theirs too and they will need it given to them in working order," Robinson says. "So the starship is a good metaphor for our situation here and now, and once again science fiction has provided the great way in for talking about the whole story, the big picture – history itself."

If this all sounds dreadfully serious, one reason Robinson, always a man to choose interesting projects over commercial endeavours, was drawn to this technique was because it was "fun". Similarly, his previous novel, *Shaman*, set in the Paleolithic era, was a book he "loved writing". And not, as you might easily assume, because it was a departure from his SF work. "In essence it was like a planetary adventure except it really happened that way, some version of that had to happen," he says, drawing parallels between the novel and a tale where human beings are "struggling to survive on an ice planet".

In this context, it's intriguing that Robinson views characters who would have lived 30,000 years ago not as people adept at creating the tools they needed to make the most of their environment. "My idea was they were really hi-tech," he says. "They were comfortable most of the time until an illness got them, that's just like now. They were working in leather and in stone and in bone and in wood, and most of that stuff has rotted away but we have their paintings in caves. I bet there were paintings on every cliff face but they've washed off."

As for his next novel, Robinson is "expanding on those scenes in *2312* that took place in a drowned New York", albeit not using the same timeline as his previous novel. As Robinson himself jokes, it will find a ready readership. "I'm kind of a brand now, people are used to me, at what I do, and if they don't like it they don't read me and if they like it, there's another one." **SFX**

Aurora is published on 9 July and reviewed on page 108.



BIODATA

- **OCCUPATION:** Novelist
- **BORN:** 1952
- **FROM:** Illinois
- **GREATEST HITS:** The *Mars* (*Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars*, 1993-96) trilogy garnered BSFA, Nebula, Hugo and Lucas awards.
- **RANDOM FACT:** Researching *Aurora*, Robinson enlisted the help of top scientists: "NASA/Ames and [planetary scientist] Chris McKay assembled a lunch group that answered all my physics questions."



HEAD

Joseph McCabe explores the mind-boggling world of *Inside Out*, Pixar's most high-concept adventure yet...



TRIP



PIXAR'S MOVIES HAVE TAKEN

us from the depths of the oceans to the farthest reaches of space. But the animation phenomenon's latest effort explores the ultimate frontier – the human mind.

Inside Out tells two tales: a coming-of-age story about Riley Johnson, a young girl whose Midwest American family moves to San Francisco, and an adventure featuring the personified emotions in Riley's head: Joy, Fear, Anger, Disgust and Sadness. For the latter, director Peter Dackter and his producer Jonas Rivera found themselves not only creating characters out of pure states of mind – a far cry from the cars, toys, and fish populating other Pixar productions – but building the world in which these characters live.

When *SFX* meets the two men at Pixar's main campus in Emeryville, California, Dackter explains how *Inside Out* came from his desire to “play inside the world of the mind”.

“You have Train of Thought and Stream of Consciousness,” says the director. “I wanted to see what that looked like. Then you get in deeper... The things that are the most important to us as people are relationships. You can think of any movie that you love, and usually, at the heart of it, there's some striking relationship. *Casablanca* – there's this beautiful love story and it's tragic and wonderful. Emotions are the key to all that. They're at the root of deep relationships. People with whom we've experienced great hardship and sadness and elation, those are the people we feel the closest to.” ➔

Concept art for Joy and Sadness – you can probably guess which is which.



Inside Out's principal relationship is between perpetually energetic Joy (voiced by *Parks And Recreation*'s Amy Poehler) and the downbeat Sadness (*The Office*'s Phyllis Smith).

"For a film like this, the attraction is you have these heady ideas to play around with," explains Doctor. "At its heart though, where the film could fail, is if it does not have a key compelling relationship. It was a really amazing opportunity to play with Joy and Sadness as that relationship, and to dramatise this understanding of growing older and maturing in characters that represent that."

The film's action kicks into gear when the two emotions are separated from their colleagues at Headquarters, in which Riley's memories are maintained, and find themselves lost as her mind literally changes around them. With its kaleidoscope-coloured Imagination Land, surreal Abstract Thought, and Hollywood-like Dream Productions, Riley's headspace is revealed as a wonderland to rival that of Alice.

"That's the fun of the idea," says the filmmaker. "If you don't do that, you're leaving stuff on the table, great entertainment that you could be having fun with; if you don't address some of those ideas, like Abstract Thought and Dream Production. Maybe on one level you could say that's too sophisticated or complex for kids. But every kid we've shown it to explains the film back to us better than the adults do. They seem to totally get it."

GREY MATTER

"Early on," says Doctor of *Inside Out*'s evolution from *Innerspace*-style adventure to Pixar's brainiest epic, "we made a distinction between the brain and the mind. Even in my first pitch to John [Lasseter] I was pretty clear on wanting to explore the mind. But the thing that John saw in it was a chance to take these far-out abstract ideas and make them practical and make them physical. Just as an example... We had at one point the console at Headquarters that all these guys work on. We had taken away all the knobs and just made this paint-like light. Joy would stand up and paint with light. She would paint these expressionistic patterns that would feel like joy. I was getting all excited about it, and we



We imagine Jeremy Clarkson has an Anger figure like this in his head.

showed it to John. He said, 'No, no, no. You're showing an abstract idea with an abstract solution. It has to be a physical, practical thing.' 'Oh, of course.' So the film worked out that way. We have knobs and things. Hopefully it's still somewhat playful and it reflects the kid, but it attempts to explain these far-out ideas and make them grounded."

Keeping Doctor himself grounded was Rivera, with whom he'd collaborated on the Oscar-winning *Up*. The producer tells *SFX* it's his job "to shepherd what I think is good."

Rivera credits set designer Don Shank as "the one who took Headquarters and pushed us into being whimsical and reminded us that it's not a starship. You still need some of those footings, but it's the mind of a little girl. That was a really big leap. That's why I kind of describe it as '[Disneyland attraction] 'It's A Small World' meets an Apple Store.' There's enough of a lab/clinic feel, but it's whimsical, colourful and there's whirligigs, and it's light."

"One of the things we tripped on early on," says Rivera, "was this problem where it started

"Science has shown there's no one more socially attuned than 11 to 15-year-old girls"

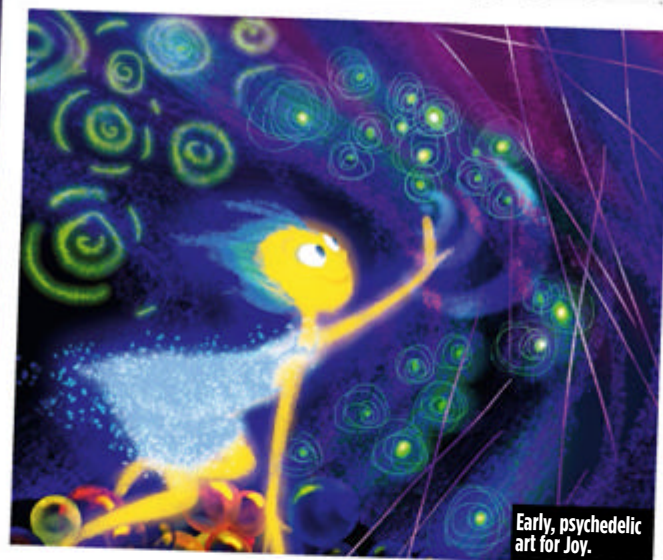
to feel robotic. It almost felt like the gears and drive of a robot. Almost like [Woody Allen's] *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex*. That's clearly not what we wanted. What was hard about both the story and the look was Pete saying, 'I want it to feel more magical. I want it to feel more emotional.' When I look at the movie now, it's like, yeah, it's very ethereal and magic. It just took a long time for that stuff to calcify."

Behind the scenes, other mechanics were required to render Joy, essentially a human light bulb who's lit from within, and the energy particles of which all the emotions are composed. The cumulative effect makes *Inside Out* look like no other Pixar film. Abandoning the attempts at photorealism that make all too many animated features look like videogames, it's a 21st century children's illustrated storybook come to life.

"I think the story asked for it," says Doctor of *Inside Out*'s distinct look. "But then if you see something, you don't want to repeat that. You want to do something different, kind of carve out your own space in the world, and break new ground. Because that is a real distraction, when you're watching a film and you feel like, 'I've kind of seen this before.' You're bored. So we're



Riley has one of her core memories triggered.



constantly trying to find new ways to bring this stuff to life."

Inside Out further distinguishes itself by being one of the studio's very few films centered on female protagonists. While Docter's own daughter Elie served as the inspiration for Riley, his decision to build this particular story around a girl was reinforced by research.

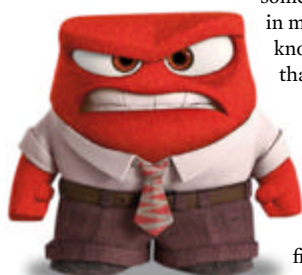
"We talked to psychologists, and they said, 'Okay, out of everybody in the world, science has shown that there's no one more socially attuned to little nuances than 11 to 15-year-old girls. You see this when you go to high school. They're totally watching everything, and they get everything from everybody – 'Did you see that look that she gave me?' That's just genetically, evolutionarily important. So we figured, 'Okay, if that's what I'm sensing, and if that's what science is telling us, we're probably in the right place here.'"

Docter's quick to point out that not all of his research was as reassuring.

"They have done studies where they have been able to sense your decision before you're consciously aware of it. So you say, 'I'm gonna move my finger. And then you move it. With a little sensor that can somehow hook to your brain, they know that you're gonna move your finger before you know. Which is weird. That is very troubling in terms of, 'Well, then, if somehow, somewhere deeper in my head, it knows before I know, then where am I in all that? What is free will?'"

"It just gets kind of trippy," he laughs.

Less cerebral were the film's other influences: classic Disney shorts like 1943 propaganda film *Reason and Emotion*.



As 1952's *Susie The Little Blue Coupe* inspired Lasseter's *Cars*, so this wartime parable of mankind's duality sparked *Inside Out*.

Says Rivera, "We love all the old Disney shorts. We are not the first to have little characters in your head or the devil and angel on Donald Duck's shoulder. But we looked at that one, and what's great about that is it's just totally gettable. In very broad strokes – you see a pretty girl and emotion takes over. What was cool about it was how rewarding it was for audiences to see it – 'I get it! That's how it works!' People will see *Inside Out* and I hope go, 'That's why I can't remember things!' or 'That's why the song gets stuck in my head!'"

SFX asks Docter and Rivera if Pixar could have painted such a picture 20 years ago, when the studio produced the first fully computer-animated film *Toy Story*.

"I don't know that it's a film we would have done 10 years ago," replies Docter.

"I'll say this," adds Rivera, "John was frustrated in the early days of *Toy Story*. 'Studios and executives don't trust the audience. We're gonna trust our audience.' I mean there's a joke in *Toy Story* about leverage and buyouts of companies and a Hasbro merger, that no kid got. But what they got was Potato Head saying something funny to Etch A Sketch. So we've always tried to pepper a little bit of something on top of the plot. That's what we love. I get a chance to make something, and I want it to be something that's rich and true and have meaning and just a reason to be in the world. You don't want to put something in the world unless you really believe in it, academically, thematically, functionally."

Rivera smiles. "That's a longwinded answer. But I'm proud that *Inside Out*'s even cued this conversation." *SFX*

Inside Out opens on 24 July.

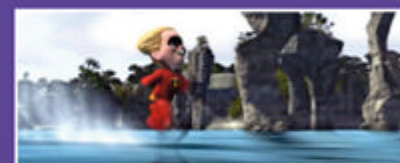
THE 5 GREATEST PIXAR MOMENTS

Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry!



MIKE AND SULLEY'S A-DOOR-ABLE RIDE

The climax of *Monsters, Inc* is superb, with its heroes slipping between the worlds of humans and monsters via the bedroom closet doors of millions of children the world over.



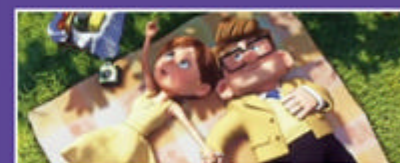
DASH RUNS ON WATER

The moment in *The Incredibles* when young Dashiell Parr realises the full extent of his superpowers perfectly encapsulates Brad Bird's loving homage to superheroics.



REMY'S KITCHEN CHASE

On paper this *Ratatouille* scene sounds like simplicity itself: a rat is chased through a kitchen. Yet Bird makes it a study of movement and vision to rival anything of Spielberg's.



CARL AND ELLIE

The prologue to Pete Docter's *Up* doesn't rely on animation so much as moviemaking technique, as it tells the story of two soulmates and a shared life full of joy and heartache.



TOYS VS INCINERATOR

Woody, Buzz and their friends accept their mortality in the finale of *Toy Story 3* by finding solace in what matters – each other. Rarely has death been faced so bravely on screen.

TIME MACHINE

THE STORY BEHIND THE SF AND FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

1980

FRIDAY THE 13TH

Calum Waddell revisits the unexpected genre blockbuster that spawned an entire industry of sequels and spin-offs...



IS THE ORIGINAL *FRIDAY*

The 13th really SFX territory?

The case *against* will argue, rightly, that it is not the invincible Jason Voorhees who is stalking and killing the teenaged camp counsellors of Crystal Lake in this initial outing – rather it's his vengeful middle-aged mother. Moreover, when Mrs Voorhees (played by the late Betsy Palmer) is decapitated by the last surviving cast member, Alice (Adrienne King), during the film's splatter-packed showdown it's evident that *that* is, indeed, *that*. The psychopath is no more and *Friday The 13th's* slice and dice mayhem comes to an abrupt conclusion.

However, the case *for* would surely point out that Sean Cunningham's trendsetting terror title is every bit as supernatural as John Carpenter's *Halloween*, the 1978 masterpiece from which *Friday The 13th* borrows most of its thematic ideas. For a start, Mrs Voorhees is strongly hinted to be possessed by the spirit of her "dead" son, Jason. Not only does she speak in his voice, and talk to him, but flashbacks indicate that she is driven to insanity by the recurring image of him drowning in Camp Crystal Lake. Is it all in her head? Maybe – but then the ending of *Friday The 13th* clearly, and indisputably, maintains that Jason lives. He is in the lake.

Indeed, the final image of Cunningham's movie is air bubbles emerging from the watery depths...

"The thing is – we just wanted a good scare at the end," admits Cunningham when *SFX* catches up with him. "I never actually thought that this was going to set up Jason as a recurring character or anything."

Yet it most certainly did. The *Friday The 13th* sequels would indicate that, as per the conclusion of the first film, Jason was a curse on Camp Crystal Lake. The mutant child who was thought to have drowned while the counsellors made love and ignored his pleas for help, was – after the decapitation of his mother – manifested into a hulking machete-wielding weirdo who cuts his way through anyone crazy enough to trespass on his land.

"I was sitting around with some friends one night, trying to work out how to make a hit children's film," laughs Cunningham, who had earlier produced 1972's *The Last House On The Left* for Wes Craven. "We came up with this title – *Friday The 13th* – and I thought, 'Well I could sell that but it



Waiting around, waiting to be killed...

won't work as a kids' movie' [laughs]. But the title stuck with me. Eventually I decided to create this advertisement for *Variety* – this great big thing with bold white letters that said '*Friday The 13th* – the most terrifying movie ever made'. I figured that if we ran this, and somebody already controlled the title, then they were going to call me and stop me [laughs]. But no one ever challenged the use of the title – instead, I got a ton of telexes from around the world because people really wanted to see a horror movie called *Friday The 13th*. It was one of these things that happened really quickly. We didn't even have a script to shoot! People were asking us what it was about so they could invest and we had to bluff everything until the screenplay was done [laughs]."

BOX OFFICE BONANZA

Cunningham's remarkably unassuming decision paid off with one of the top 20 grossing films of its year (in the summer of 1980, *Friday The 13th* ran second only to *The Empire Strikes Back* for a few weeks). Shot for just over \$500,000 in a (still functioning) Boy Scout site in New Jersey called Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco, the film also gave future



Could have landed in a more painful place.



And that's why you take swimming lessons, kids.

"I NEVER THOUGHT JASON WAS GOING TO BE A RECURRING CHARACTER"



We apologise if you haven't seen this film yet!

But she'd had a *fantastic* Thursday the 12th.



The EE adverts were just a glint in Kevin Bacon's eye.

superstar Kevin Bacon his first significant screen role. Furthermore, in addition to a suitably sinister soundtrack ("ki-ki-ki-ma-ma-ma"), Cunningham's decision to hire an up-and-coming special effects guru by the name of Tom Savini saw *Friday The 13th* initiate a new movement in gruesome horror violence.

"I think part of the fun with *Friday The 13th* was that this was before we had CGI," admits Cunningham. "So you were kind of seeing a magic show. You had Betsy Palmer standing there, and someone swinging a machete at her, and all of a sudden you saw her head come off, and blood spurting everywhere [laughs]. Now this was 1980 and I promise you, you had never seen that before and it is sort of like a magician sawing his assistant in half. You know he did not *really* saw her in half but it sure looked like he did, so how did he do that? There is a kind of fun in that sort of magic trick, right? And that's where we were in the history of special effects – and why *Friday The 13th* became such an important horror film. I love the scene that Tom Savini planned where Kevin Bacon is on his bed and all of a sudden this arrow comes out of his neck – 'Holy shit – what happened there?' you know? Now, you understand that the arrow didn't actually come out through his neck, but 'How did they do that?' I miss those days of practical magic."

PSYCHO KILLER

Of course, no one is ever going to award *Friday The 13th* any prizes for its plot. A night at a summer camp, preparing for the arrival of the children, becomes a desperate attempt to

The New Romantic pop group that never was?



Jason goes for a dip in the finale.

survive when Mrs Voorhees picks off the counsellors one by one. But where *Friday The 13th* excels is in making its young leads likeable. They might have sex, smoke the odd joint and play pranks on one another, but as with Jamie Lee Curtis in *Halloween*, you generally want this ragtag group of teenagers to make it to the end in one piece.

"When I read the script, I thought to myself, 'I think this is going to be a really creepy movie,'" admits Adrienne King, who played the film's sole surviving heroine. "It was a dream come true for me to land the lead role. I thought the character of Alice was great and I wanted her to live – and that includes making it through part two – even though they decided to kill me in the sequel [laughs]. But it was a family atmosphere making that first film with Sean, Tom and Kevin. We were just a tiny little independent feature being made in cold weather out in the back of beyond."

For King, *Friday The 13th's* biggest challenge proved to be surviving the shock ending in which her character is pulled to the muddy

FRIDAY THE 13TH – ON TV!

Long before the days of Sam Raimi announcing a small-screen *Evil Dead* spin-off, and the likes of *Bates Motel* and *Hannibal*, '80s staples *Friday The 13th* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street* made a mark on prime-time television. *Freddy's Nightmares* (1988-1990) was an obvious hit, but the non-conversational Jason was a trickier terror totem to translate to broadcasting. As such, when Paramount's *Friday The 13th: The Series* premiered in 1987 fans were confused: the hockey mask-wearer was nowhere to be seen. Instead, the show – which ran for three seasons – tells of an antique store which sells haunted paraphernalia. Nevertheless, the show attracted its own cult following and is now, rightly, seen as one of the highlights of horror on television.



Next episode this, um, Tuesday?



Special effects master Tom Savini creating bloody mayhem.

JASON LIVES

After nine sequels, a crossover with Freddy Krueger and a woeful Michael Bay-produced remake, we at SFX are still confused as to what Jason Voorhees even *is*. His mother kills those trying to reopen Camp Crystal Lake in the first film because she believes it besmirches her son's memory.

However, the conclusion indicates that Jason may be, in fact, a ghost. In part two (1981), Jason is rumoured to be a wildman who never died but in fact grew up under the care of forest animals (think *The Jungle Book's* Mowgli if he was indestructible and insane). Of course, this made no sense to anyone and *Friday The 13th Part II* took in just half the box office of the original movie. 3D was introduced for part three (1983) and part four was announced as *The Final Chapter* (1984). Not wanting to kill a cash cow, part five (1985) introduced a copycat killer while part six (1986) finally attempted to explain Jason as a zombie-ghoul who can never be killed. By *Jason Goes To Hell* (1993), however, he is an alien slug who can body hop from human-to-human. Makes no sense to us either...



Jason's hockey mask didn't turn up till part three.

"ALL WE WERE TRYING TO DO WAS MAKE A SMALL MOVIE FOR A SMALL AUDIENCE"

floor of Crystal Lake by a suddenly not-dead-at-all Jason Voorhees...

"We nearly ran out of money and when I was doing that scene in the lake at the end we did not even have enough cash for a wetsuit," sighs the actress. "It was absolutely freezing [laughs]. We were on an absolute minimum budget and everyone was surprised that Sean even managed to finish the movie. I have never been so cold in my life!"

PERFECT TIMING

King was not the only one who realised that this backwoods bout of bloody mayhem was shaping up to be something that would take the multiplex by storm. After completing his carnage-ridden romp, Cunningham took the unlikely decision to knock on the doors of the major American studios. With the independently distributed *Halloween* fresh in everyone's minds, the big leagues were eager to find the next big horror hit. In other words: the director's timing was impeccable...

"Sean let me come along to the screenings that he was doing for

the studios," recalls King. "I remember that was how my mum saw it for the first time. It was at the Paramount lot and when the ending, with Jason, came out of nowhere she jumped right out of her seat [laughs]. I turned around and saw Sean shaking hands with someone. It turned out it was Frank Mancuso, one of the top guys at Paramount Pictures, and the rest – as they say – is history..."

After *Friday The 13th* proved to be a phenomenon, Cunningham was handed the keys to the Hollywood castle. However, perhaps in tune with his rebellious independent beginnings, the director opted out of taking the reins of the sequels.

Instead, selling away his property rights to Camp Crystal Lake, Cunningham wanted nothing to do with Paramount's plans to make *Friday The 13th* into a fright franchise.

"It was sort of like this little cash cow that kept coming around every year or two but which they were kind of embarrassed by," he admits. "But, no, I don't regret not

doing the sequels. There are financial reasons why I should have made them but I just thought, 'I don't want to do the same film all over again.' I did *Friday The 13th* and that's fine, but I didn't want to keep doing it, and I wasn't driven to do it."

Nevertheless, the shadow of Jason would not leave Cunningham's life. In the early 1990s his hit property was brought back into his possession and, just like Baron Frankenstein trying to murder his own monstrous creation, he attempted to kill it once for all. However, since *Jason Goes To Hell: The Final Friday* (1993's ninth instalment), Cunningham has been tempted back to produce *Jason X* (2002), *Freddy Vs Jason* (2003) and the inevitable remake (in 2009). Despite his earlier attempt to walk away, the director-turned-producer just can't seem to give up the Voorhees ghost...

"All we were trying to do with that first film was make a small movie that might find a small audience," laughs the director in retrospect. "If you had told me *Friday The 13th* would somehow lead to merchandising, hockey masks and a television show I would never have believed you. It just goes to show, though, that 13 isn't always an unlucky number!" **SFX**

Guess whether she reaches the end credits or not.



PENNY DREADFUL



What's happening in the world of horror movies this month...



The '90s are socking it to the '80s this month with *Scream* the TV show about to arrive and news of another new sassy-smart meta-slasher series on its way, while poor old *Poltergeist* didn't do

the numbers despite the insistent scary clown leering off the side of buses. But forget nostalgia: for new thrills all you need is a dirty Belgian wolf-boy...



VIRTUAL UNREALITY BITES

 I didn't like *Insidious 2* so I skipped *Insidious 3* (see p96 for the review). Instead I went to a 4D séance with Leigh Whannell... This was the promo event for *I3*, where an illusionist pretended to conjure the spirits while we held hands in the dark (gripping paws with the man who co-created *Saw* is a terror indeed...). Several beers later and we got to try the *Insidious 3* Oculus Rift experience which involves sitting in an armchair strapped into eyewear and earphones and venturing to the other side. Gimmicky it may be, but effective it definitely is. I'm not a gamer but horror is making leaps and bounds in this sphere, including the recent *Alien Isolation*, which I'm reliably told is

almost too scary to be fun. I don't game because I'm crap at it but the immersiveness is a massive draw – Oculus Rift was like a very high-end portable scare maze. Imagine a whole arcade of these – punters strapped into recliners screaming as terrors assault them. There's a horror movie in that...

BE PREPARED

 Movie of the month: *Cub* – a Belgian cross-breed where a group of young scouts get stuck in a forest tricked-out with traps where a wolf-boy called Kai, invented by the kindly leader, might also reside. A young and troubled boy is at the centre of this coming-of-age slasher which pits pack against pack in those years where morality and personality are formed. A confused ending

disappoints, yet this is a great-looking piece of dark psychology in psycho's clothing.

STARS IN THEIR EYES

 Out on DVD this month three horrors with classy casts. The pick of the bunch is John McNaughton's *Can't Come Out To Play* where Samantha Morton is a terrifying matriarch forbidding her sick son to become friends with a local girl. Michael Shannon is her long-suffering husband in a tense, twisty thriller that never matches the grubby highs of *Henry*. Worth a watch for the performances. Then Julia Stiles, Stephen Rea and Scott Speedman star in *Out Of The Dark*, set in Colombia where young Americans are out of their depth

in a town filled with superstition. Starts well, ends messy. Finally, *Stonehearst Asylum*, rammed with talent (Kate Beckinsale, Ben Kingsley, Jason Flemyng) and directed by *The Machinist* man Brad Anderson. Based on a story by Poe about an asylum where the inmates are all over the shop, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with it except the total lack of peril or any sense of who this is for. May send it to my mum, who'll probably also give it three stars.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING NEXT AUTUMN

 Could it be horror's perennial obsession with the '70s and '80s is finally moving on a decade? Are we about to see a load of depressing remakes of *Urban*

DREADFUL OLD MOVIE

Notorious video nasty *Anthrophagus* is getting a rerelease from 88 Films this month. A lurid Italian cannibal gorno set on an island where a crazy killer picks off – and eats! – a bunch of tourists it's directed by erotic horror maestro Joe D'Amato, though this isn't in any way saucy. Unless you mean intestines slathered with red sauce. Only for the strong of stomach and not to be watched with dinner.



One *Cub* who must promise to do his best – which might not be enough.



DREADFUL A-Z OF HORROR

Penny's monthly dictionary of doom

Q IS FOR... QUEER (OR LGBT)

STRANGER BY THE LAKE

Alain Guiraudie, 2013

► Languorous, sun-drenched French thriller where a young man "cruising" by a lake falls for a dangerous suitor who may be a killer. Sexual exploration runs alongside a Hitchcockian plot in a gorgeous location, building to a tense climax. Won the Queer Palm at Cannes.



THE VAMPIRE LOVERS

Roy Ward Baker, 1970

► Based on Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, and the first of Hammer's lesbian vampire Karnstein trilogy. Daring for the time, it features a beautiful female vamp (Ingrid Pitt) who befriends and seduces a general's daughter (Pippa Steel). Soft "blood and bosoms" erotica that embraces sapphic sensuality.



THE HUNGER

Tony Scott, 1983

► Another artsy vamp film where Catherine Deneuve's immortal empowers and devours David Bowie and tries to seduce Susan Sarandon in a bisexual reinvention of the genre. Too slow and grim for the *Twilight* crowd but fascinating nonetheless.



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2

Jack Sholder, 1985

► According to the director not explicitly planned as groundbreaking gay cinema, but since embraced as such (by him and the cast as well as fans), from the tagline "The Man Of Your Dreams Is Back" to its all-male kill count (super-unusual for the era) to the bit where a gym teacher is knock-off naked in a shower after being thoroughly towel-whipped. A camp classic.



So do we get a *Gandhi* or a *Sexy Beast* Ben Kingsley in *Stonehearst Asylum*?

Legend and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*? Not necessarily, but the first trailer for Fox's new meta-horror comedy *Scream Queens*, airing in September, certainly feels like a throwback to the "golden age" of Kevin Williamson. Set in a swanky sorority, Emma Roberts plays the queen bitch, going head-to-head with Jamie Lee Curtis's dean over new sorority initiates, when the girls start getting offed one by one by a killer dressed as a red devil. "It's *Mean Girls* meets *Friday The 13th*," according to Roberts, who starred in *Scream 4*. "It's laugh-out-loud funny, edge-of-your-seat scary and everyone wears Chanel." The *Scream* TV series itself starts on MTV in June, which seems to suggest post-modern stalk and slash might be rising from the dead. That's so fetch.

SEND IN THE CLOWNS



Will Poulter is set to play Pennywise in Cary Fukunaga's two-part remake of *It*! Rejoice the bold casting choice! Only don't because now Fukunaga's pulled out citing "creative differences" and the project's gone back to Warner after

New Line halted it indefinitely. Speculation has it this was related to the "disappointing" \$23 million opening weekend of the *Poltergeist* remake, a film also from the '80s and featuring a scary clown. Does this mean '80s reboots featuring scary clowns are over? But the two are hardly like for like. *Poltergeist*, the original, may have a bit of clown action, but it's hardly a big part of the film. *Poltergeist*'s original beauty was as a gateway movie for curious teens, a film where the supernatural is explored within the confines of a loving family (and an Indian burial ground). It is about errant adults creating damaged kids who have to confront their childhood trauma in later years. It could have been an ambitious and important allegory made by an accomplished director. Fukunaga could have done a Kubrick. But they want him to do a James Wan. Clown car for one!



Julia Stiles coming
Out Of The Dark.

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★★★★★ Superb ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Average ★★★★★ Poor ★ Terrible

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Maggie

Arnold Schwarzenegger gets a chance to flex his acting muscles in this surprisingly moving take on the zombie apocalypse.

100



It Follows

This elegantly simple horror in which a girl's stalked by a supernatural shapeshifter is the month's stand-out Blu-ray.

108



Aurora

Kim Stanley Robinson's tale of a generation starship is blessed with both big ideas and genuine emotion.

Jurassic World

Park Strife



Release Date: OUT NOW!

12A | 125 minutes

Director: Colin Trevorrow

Cast: Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Irrfan Khan, Vincent D'Onofrio, Judy Greer

“NO ONE’S IMPRESSED BY dinosaurs anymore,” says Bryce Dallas Howard’s tightly-wound Claire Dearing, early on in *Jurassic World*. It’s a fair point: some 22 years since Steven Spielberg brilliantly breathed life into these prehistoric creatures in *Jurassic Park*, seeing dinosaurs roam the Earth – or rather on a private island near Costa Rica – is no longer quite the wonder it once was.

Even if the T-Rex and its pals have been largely absent from cinemas since 2001’s Joe Johnston-directed *Jurassic Park III*, their mythological counterparts have not. From *Pacific Rim* to *Godzilla*, modern audiences have been well-served with CG-driven beasts causing wanton destruction on the big screen. So, like the lady says, why on earth do we need another *Jurassic Park*?

Incoming director Colin Trevorrow approaches the question with zeal. Inspired by a trio of ideas bestowed to him by Spielberg, *Jurassic World* is a fiendishly crafted blockbuster: old-fashioned thrills, heroism and romance, locked inside a smart, self-aware shell. Quite an achievement for a director whose

A fiendishly crafted blockbuster

only previous experience was the likeable-but-limited 2012 time-travel indie *Safety Not Guaranteed*.

Unlike Johnston’s sequel and Spielberg’s own earlier 1997 follow-up *The Lost World*, both of which were guilty of recycling ideas and characters from the original, *Jurassic World* finally realises the vision of John Hammond, Richard Attenborough’s billionaire who first dreamt of a theme park full of prehistoric dinosaurs. It takes us back to Isla Nublar, where this ultimate attraction has been open to the public for a decade – backed now by Masrani Global, the corporation that took over Hammond’s InGen after his death.

With ticket sales dwindling, Irrfan Khan’s helicopter-flying tycoon Simon Masrani has opted to radically stimulate interest in *Jurassic World*, with a genetically-modified dinosaur hybrid that’s been bred in isolation. With this so-called Indominus Rex set to be unveiled, overseeing final safety checks is Howard’s aforementioned Operations Manager – on the very same weekend that her two nephews, the hormone-sprouting teen Zach (Nick Robinson) and his younger, dinosaur-crazy brother Gray (Ty Simpkins), are set for a long-overdue visit.

It doesn’t take a palaeontologist to predict that the Indominus Rex will escape, nor that these squabbling siblings are set to be prime dino-feed. Saving the day is largely left to Chris Pratt’s park ranger Owen Grady. Part David Attenborough, part Steve McQueen, he’s soothing Raptors one minute, racing with them on motorbikes the next. If *Guardians Of The Galaxy*’s Star-Lord was Pratt’s Han Solo, then

Grady is his Indiana Jones. Should the rumours of Pratt’s appointment as a rebooted Dr Jones come to pass, then surely the barrel-roll he does under a closing gate of the Raptor enclosure serves as the ideal audition.

More problematic is Bryce Dallas Howard’s contribution. It’s her first film since 2011’s *The Help*, and with her character forced to cross a far bigger emotional canyon than Pratt, it makes for a tricky comeback. Her role is the career-driven cold-heart who must find her soul en route to survival, and it’s not hard to see why Joss Whedon tweeted that early

footage of her made him think of “70s-era sexism”. It doesn’t help that, rather ridiculously, she spends the entire film in high heels (even sprinting in them, in one sequence).

As he did with *Safety Not Guaranteed*, Trevorrow toys with archetypes – and, to be fair, the banter between Pratt and Howard’s characters is more enjoyable than offensive; think Harrison Ford and Kate Capshaw in Spielberg’s own *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*. Impressively, when romance flares, it’s swift, unexpected and makes the heart leap. And while a safety video featuring US talk show





host Jimmy Fallon falls flat, the humour is largely well-timed – notably an attempted kiss, amid the height of panic, that goes disastrously wrong.

With *Jurassic World* like a Spielberg movie in all but name, Trevorrow pays great attention to what makes a summer blockbuster tick. Setpieces are brisk but well-executed – whether it's Zach and Gray trapped, like figures in a snowglobe, by the Indominus Rex, or the late-on scenes of park-wide carnage when the dinosaur droppings really hit the fan. Trevorrow may never quite match some of the classic scares of *Jurassic Park* – the blood is kept to a few splatters on the wall in this 12A –

but it's an electrifying watch, summed up by a superb smackdown of a finale every bit as beastly as *Godzilla* or *Pacific Rim*.

Aiding the adrenaline is the excellent 3D conversion. Trevorrow reserves the leap-out-from-the-screen moments until they're strictly necessary, but you'll really feel like you bought a ticket to *Jurassic World*. The blend of animatronics and CGI is also as seamless as you might expect, for the director clearly recognises the need for us to feel the textures of the earlier films, which is just as important as hearing that great John Williams score again.

Not everything clicks: a fight in the jungle with Special Forces soldiers vs the Indominus Rex feels like Trevorrow spent the night watching *Predator*. And a storyline involving Vincent D'Onofrio's scheming employee planning to use Owen's trained Raptors as military-grade weapons is under-developed. But these are minor gripes about a film that is easily the best entry in the franchise since the original. Not impressed by dinosaurs anymore? Now you will be. **James Mottram**

 The only actor to return from *Jurassic Park* is BD Wong, who once again plays geneticist Dr Henry Wu.

MINDPROGE •

Chris Pratt

Owen Grady in *Jurassic World*

► How did you prepare yourself to play someone who works with dinosaurs?

We treated it very real. Disbelief was suspended, dinosaurs existed and someone was trying to train them. What techniques would you use? Who would you hire? I talked to people who train dolphins, canines and parrots. There's a lot of different techniques used to train animals – you can shock them, you can give them a hug, and everything in between.

► How does Owen Grady compare to the goofier characters you've played?

There's definitely a darkness to him. It's there underneath, but he still has fun. He also has a history with Claire, Bryce Dallas Howard's character. Something went on between them that we sort of explore through the course of the movie. It's reminiscent of *Romancing The Stone* or *The African Queen*. But essentially, he's dark. He's a combat veteran. He's chosen to live on an island for a reason. He's running from something, and a bit of an animal himself.

► Has the success of *Guardians Of The Galaxy* changed your life?

Yeah, I've noticed it. Very few elements of my life have changed, but the ones that have have been pretty drastic changes. I'm still a dad and I'm still a husband and when the light bulbs go out, you've got to fix them. Life is still going on at a slow and normal pace. But now opportunities at work have changed in a very hyper-real way. **Richard Edwards**

© GETTY (1)

Maggie

"I'll be dad"

★★★★★

Release Date: 17 July

15 (TBC) | TBC minutes

Director: Henry Hobson

Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Abigail Breslin, Joely Richardson, Douglas M Griffin, JD Evermore, Rachel Whitman Groves

MAGGIE'S NOT THE FILM THAT springs to mind when you hear the words "Schwarzenegger" and "zombies". There are no pithy one-liners, no exploding heads, and Arnie barely has to flex a bicep in anger. It's a zombie movie that aims for the heart instead of aiming for the head.

It's set several months after an outbreak of the Necroambulist virus. Every half-decent zombie film requires a twist on the format; in this case it's how long it takes to "turn" – six to eight weeks. That tweak transforms zombiedom into a metaphor for terminal illness, making *Maggie* a weepie about coming to terms with impending loss.

Arnie plays Wade, father of Maggie (Abigail Breslin), an infected teen whose time is ticking away. The role gives Arnold a chance to show his range, and he does a decent job of conveying kind-eyed concern; he's never looked more grizzled, or more vulnerable. The Austrian Oak isn't immune to the lachrymose atmosphere either, though since he never gets more than

moist-eyed it's difficult to banish the image of an acting coach rushing in between takes brandishing half an onion.

While it's understandable that the script doesn't give Arnie a great deal to say (it always tends to start going wrong once he opens his mouth), it's also a weakness. We're supposed to be watching a father and daughter's final days together, but barring one scene where the two discuss Maggie's late mother, they barely bond. Okay, you don't expect them to play swingball or go for milkshakes, but you'd have thought they'd have a couple more heart-to-hearts. And after telling us repeatedly that Wade has a difficult decision to make – surrender Maggie to the horrors of a quarantine centre, or "make it quick" – ultimately the matter's taken out of his hands, which seems like something of a cop-out.

Still, both the approach and the intimate rural setting are original for this genre, and it's a very attractive film: expect scenic shots of *People Being Sad*, accompanied by mournful piano. Those of a melancholic disposition will happily surrender to *Maggie's* miserabilist embrace.

Ian Berriman

Debutant director Henry Hobson created the original title sequence for *The Walking Dead*.



Song Of The Sea

Lovingly made Irish fantasy

★★★★★

Release Date: 10 July

PG | 94 minutes

Director: Tomm Moore

Cast: David Rawle, Fionnula Flanagan, Brendan Gleeson, Lisa Hannigan

SONG OF THE SEA WAS among the contenders for Best Animated Feature at the Oscars this February. It didn't win, but now we can finally see it, it's clear why it was nominated. This is a lovely, crafted film, simple-seeming yet multi-layered, drawing on myths and children's literature, with fairy folk and a romping sheepdog.

It's an Irish fantasy, the successor (though not sequel) to a previous Oscar nominee *The Secret Of Kells*, also by director Tomm Moore. *Song Of The Sea* is about a brother and sister, 10-year-old Ben and

six-year-old Saoirse, who live with their dad (Brendan Gleeson) at a lighthouse. Saoirse never speaks, but is drawn to the sea and the seals that watch her. Ben is unusual for a cartoon kid; he's a *bad* brother, cruel and resentful towards the sweet-natured Saoirse. He has more than a touch of the obnoxious Edmund

from *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*, one of many stories echoed here.

Saoirse, it's quickly clear, is magical, drawing the kids into an adventure which takes them across the Irish countryside, into dark forests and deep wells. Among the folk they meet is a man who lives in his own giant beard and a scary witch in a hut, who's half-owl, half monster granny. The drawing is flattened, ornamental and mysterious, with curls and crescents, tweaked perspectives and proportions. At first it can look like

Sadly, the Chuckle Brothers weren't at the end of the pier.



A lovely, crafted film, simple-seeming yet multi-layered

CBeebies fare, until you see the loving compositions in every shot, the way the images flow and fit together. Some subtleties are only clear later, such as why two fantastical characters resemble human ones in the tradition of *The Wizard Of Oz*.

Older viewers may find some of the story beats overfamiliar from other fantasy books and films. And *Song Of The Sea* takes a while to really get going; the kids' magical journey seems to start more than once, and at first it just feels like an arbitrary quest. By the end, though, it resolves into a rich allegory for healing and atonement, for living through loss and loving what remains. **Andrew Osmond**

Tomm Moore started thinking about selkie stories after a holiday where he and his son found a dead seal, killed by local fishermen.



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Poltergeist

They're here. Again...

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

15 | 94 minutes

Director: Gil Kenan

Cast: Sam Rockwell, Rosemarie DeWitt, Jared Harris, Jane Adams

IF YOU REALLY WANNA

make some money quick, a poltergeist abduction isn't a bad idea..." So says paranormal investigator Boyd (Nicholas Braun) halfway into Gil Kenan's slick update of the 1982 Steven Spielberg/Tobe Hooper spook film. The executives at Ghost House Pictures clearly feel the same. The original *Poltergeist* is more fondly remembered gateway flick than genre classic, but it displayed a singular mix of Hooperian peril and Spielbergian charm. So why bother remaking it? The studio claims it's to "update an iconic brand", words that are way more chilling than anything in the movie.

You know the story: nice family move into not-nice house: parents

Eric (Sam Rockwell) and Amy (Rosemarie DeWitt), plus stage-school cutie Madison (Kennedi Clements), worrisome mini-Jesse Eisenberg Griffin (Kyle Catlett) and sulky teen Kendra (Saxon Sharbino). It's not long before buying a house full of creaky attic bedrooms and inexplicably locked cupboards proves a predictably poor call. Although the family dynamic is well sketched by scripter David Lindsay-Abaire, Kenan is so, ahem, eager to skip to the good bit, the film quickly becomes a tick-list of 3D CG gotchas: the tree, the TV, the clowns plural. "Why would someone leave a box of clowns?" puzzles Griffin, the film's second stupidest line after a groan-inducing comment about "an ancient tribal graveyard".

Rockwell, as ever, is twitchily brilliant, whether cracking jokes ("Yeah, well, we got too many kids") or just cracking up – the scene where he bursts into tears at the fate of his daughter, alone in the ether,



Yet still it was preferable to *Jeremy Kyle*.

feels joltingly real. And just when it seems like Kenan's given up the ghost, comes a finale set amid freaky, flailing spirits that's so imaginatively staged it lifts the entire film. It still wouldn't scare even the nerviest of 15-year-olds, but then nobody seems clear who *Poltergeist* is aimed at. Too slight

for adults, too silly for teens, too niche for the suits and too naff for the fans, it's trapped in the kind of limbo you need more than an exorcist and a length of rope to escape from. **Matt Glasby**

Sam Rockwell phoned up JoBeth Williams and Craig T Nelson (stars of the original film) to ask their advice.

Insidious: Chapter 3

A steaming pile of third

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

15 | 98 minutes

Director: Leigh Whannell

Cast: Dermot Mulroney, Stefanie Scott, Angus Sampson, Leigh Whannell, Lin Shaye

THE FIRST OF THE RECENT

glut of slick haunted-house flicks, *Insidious* was, in places, genuinely unnerving, but ran out of story steam way before the last act. So what's left for *Chapter 3*, the directorial debut of series scribe and co-star Leigh Whannell?

Set "a few years before" *Insidious*, it re-introduces medium Elise Rainier (Lin Shaye) as a younger, sadder woman who's given up on her gifts. When teenager Quinn (Stefanie Scott) knocks at her door, asking for help communicating with her late mother, Elise warns her off: "If you call out to one of the dead, all of them can hear you." Quinn's soon in contact with *something* – but it sure as hell ain't mommy.

Whannell's writing deserves some kudos. Quinn breaks both legs



and is effectively bed-bound while all manner of demonic nasties stalk her room – a smart set-up for a modern spook story. But what works on the page doesn't quite translate to the screen: the chief antagonist is a memorably nasty creation, but his sudden appearances leave no dread, so the (many) jump scares spike and dissipate almost immediately. Other aspects don't work at all: the bland family dynamics, shaky acting, and out-of-place jokes. A final lift from *The Sixth Sense* reminds us it is possible to be scary, moving and funny, it's just extremely rare.

When a horror film's most shocking moment involves hurling a vehicle at us, something's gone amiss. Shame, because the plot has real potential. **Matt Glasby**

The film features a golden retriever by the name of Warren – a nod to Ed and Lorraine Warren from *The Conjuring*.

51° North

★★★★★

Release Date: 3 July

TBC | 88 minutes

Director: Grigorij Richters



IT'S PRETTY

difficult to make the end of the world seem dull, but this turgid, heavily improvised found-footage drama somehow manages it.

Tied-in with 30 June's *Asteroid Day*, it initially comes across like an attempt to educate The Kids by stealth, sneaking in talking heads with real-life astronomers as bellend vlogger Damon becomes obsessed with the idea of an apocalyptic asteroid strike. Cue interminable scenes of him arguing with his girlfriend and business partner. Then Damon discovers just such an event is imminent, and mostly mopes around in his flat.

Only a sequence of a panicking crowd has any brio, and even that looks like an over-excited flash mob. When the debris finally rains down, you'll have been praying for it to vaporise London for 20 minutes. **Calvin Baxter**

ALSO OUT

It's a hectic month for cinema releases, with no less than half a dozen movies which haven't screened yet out before the next issue hits. First up, on 26 June: *Despicable Me* spin-off **MINIONS**. Arnie's back on 3 July, as **TERMINATOR GENISYS** lands, while on 10 July Mark Wahlberg returns with his potty-mouthed chum in **TED 2**. Finally, 17 July brings us a trio of releases, the big one (or should that be teeny-tiny one?) being **ANT-MAN**. It's joined by Blumhouse found-footage horror **THE GALLOWS** and Tarsem Singh's consciousness-transfer film **SELF/LESS**. There'll be reviews of all these available at <http://bit.ly/sfxreviews> just as soon as we can see 'em and write about 'em.



Ant-Man goes big in July.

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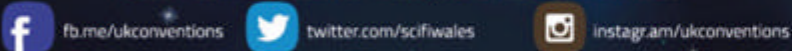
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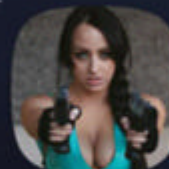
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Jupiter Ascending

Yes, Cinders, you *shall* rule the planet

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 29 June (download OUT NOW!)

2015 | 12 | Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray/DVD/download

Directors: The Wachowskis

Cast: Channing Tatum, Mila Kunis, Sean Bean, Eddie Redmayne, Douglas Booth, Tuppence Middleton



“ASTROLOGY IS bullshit,” says Jupiter Jones, loo brush in hand, crouching over a toilet in *Jupiter Ascending*. That’s as

may be, but the film itself appears to have been born under the sign of the turkey.

It’s a shame, because the intentions are good. *Jupiter Ascending* is a cheery attempt to produce a good old-fashioned sci-fi romp – fast-moving, witty, spectacular, action-packed. It’s all those things and less.

In the extras, directing duo the Wachowskis mention how one of the biggest influences on their work is *The Wizard Of Oz*. Never has this been more the case than it is here. Not so much because Channing Tatum plays Toto (well, sort of... bear with us) but because once you lift the veil of awesome visuals you’re left with dull disappointment. (To flog this metaphor to death, the film could also do with a brain and a heart... though you could never accuse the Wachowskis of lacking courage).

Once again the Wachowskis have built something spectacular but hollow inside

Jupiter Ascending is a sci-fi/fantasy smörgåsbord, splicing together *Cinderella*, *Oz* and *Alice In Wonderland* and giving them a space-based makeover. The Cinders/Dorothy/Alice here is Jupiter Jones, played with the same perky, spunky, wide-eyed wonder Mila Kunis brought to *Oz The Great And Powerful* (coincidence? Or a very expensive meta-gag?). Jones is the stargazing, toilet-cleaning daughter of a Russian immigrant to America. Notably, we only ever see her clean toilets in very posh apartments, because the last thing the Wachowskis want in this film is grim reality. Hell, even when we first go into space to meet the film’s bad guys on a post-apocalyptic planet, the ashes in the streets *glisten*.

The bad guys are two brothers and a sister from the powerful Abraxas family, which runs an intergalactic business harvesting planets. They’re also very competitive, and each wants control of Earth, a valuable planet on the cusp of harvesting. Currently, Balem Abrasax (Eddie Redmayne in stare-and-simmer mode) owns it, but his claim could be scuppered because, would you credit it, their long-dead mother has been reborn on Earth in the form of Jupiter Jones, and the forward-thinking matriarch bequeathed herself Earth in her will should she ever reappear. So now the race is on between the siblings to find Jupiter and either marry her, kill her or hand her over to the space police, depending on which sibling you are.

On Jupiter’s side is Caine Wise (Channing Tatum), a mercenary who’s been genetically-spliced with a wolf (see, we told you he was Toto) and Stinger, his old military mate who’s been spliced with a bee (Sean

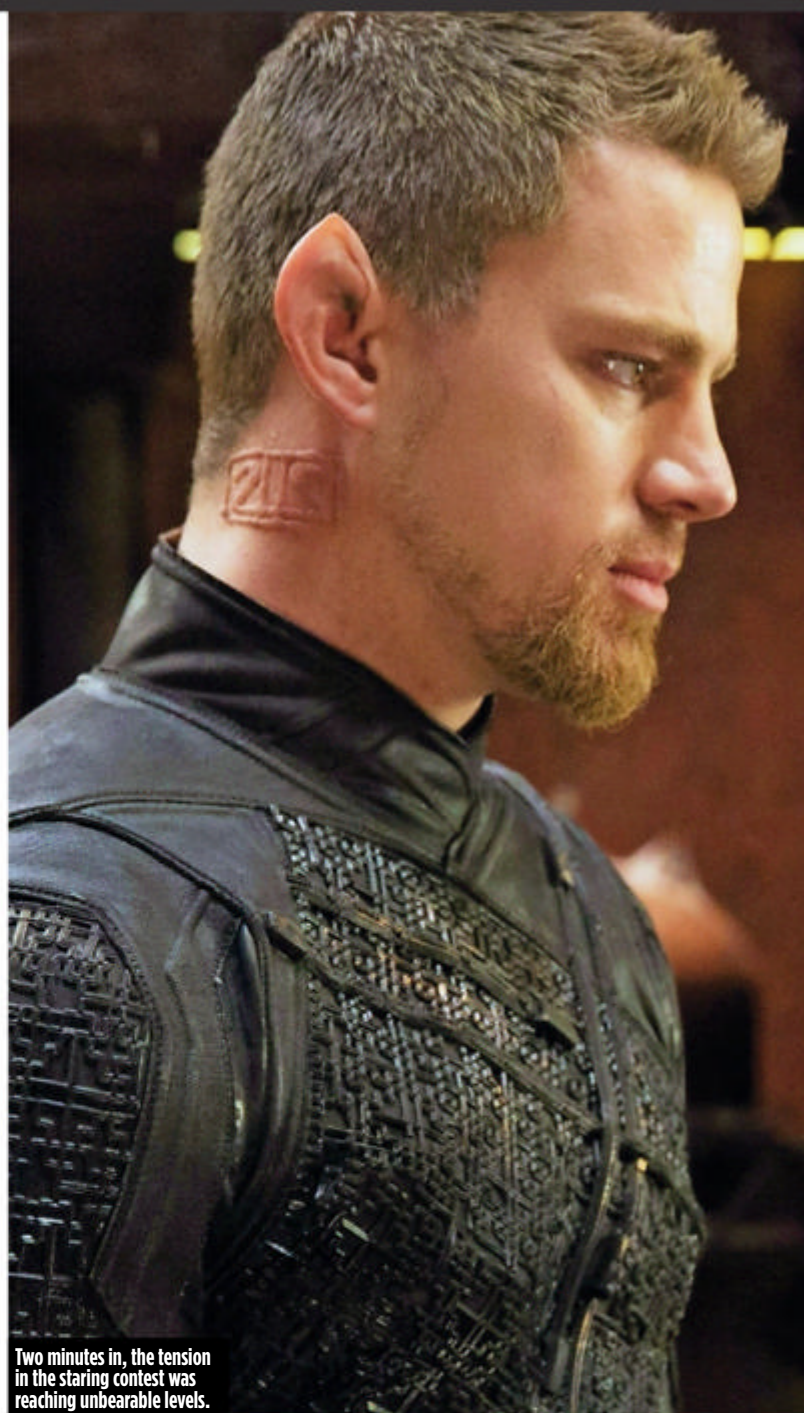
Two minutes in, the tension in the staring contest was reaching unbearable levels.

Bean with a stripy black and yellow haircut). The make-up on these two is quite subtle, as they’ve clearly got good agents. Actors further down the pecking order look more like creatures from *The Island Of Doctor Moreau*. (Bean even seems slightly embarrassed in the Blu-ray extras that he got off relatively lightly while fellow thespians suffered.)

So it becomes a magical journey into space for Jupiter as she travels from *Dune* world to *Harry Potter* world, to *Brazil* world, to *Blade Runner* world (some of these worlds are actually ships, but you get the idea). Extras from the 1980 *Flash*

Gordon film pop up everywhere. All credit to the Wachowskis – and their design teams – for creating so many different exotic cultures and locations. The problem is, none of these feel fresh or new; there’s a whiff of generic familiarity to all of them. It must have seemed like a clever idea to hire *Brazil* director Terry Gilliam for a cameo on a bureaucratic world but all it really does is highlight how much of a *Brazil* rip-off the entire sequence is.

The action sequences are serviceable enough but uninviting. While the Marvel and *The Fast And The Furious* franchises effortlessly





mix character beats into the battles, it looks like the Wachowskis simply wrote "and then they fight" in the script and worked out the choreography later.

The end result is yet another grand folly from the Wachowskis. Once again they've encouraged an army of skilful artisans to build something spectacular but architecturally unsound and hollow inside, with no useful function. You'd think any film that features Sean Bean as a Bee-Man would be destined for *Flash Gordon*-style future cultdom. *Jupiter Ascending*, though, is more likely to descend into obscurity.

EXTRAS: There's no commentary, so the bulk of the extras are a bunch of

short making-of documentaries, with interviews and behind-the-scenes footage. They're also packed with comments from actors about how original the film is, which just goes to show what great actors they are – they really sound like they believe what they're saying.

So you get "Jupiter Jones: Destiny Is Within Us" (seven minutes) which concentrates on the film's central character; "Caine Wise: Interplanetary Warrior" (five minutes) which spotlights Channing Tatum's wolf-man; "The Wachowskis: Minds Over Matter" (seven minutes) is all about the directors; "Worlds

Within Worlds Within Worlds" (nine minutes) is about the shooting and locations; "Jupiter Ascending: Genetically Spliced" (10 minutes) reveals the monster make-up and costume secrets; "Bullet Time Evolved" (nine minutes) examines the effects; and "From Earth To Jupiter (And Everywhere In Between)" (nine minutes) explores the set designs. The only real irritation is that some of the interview answers are repeated in different featurettes. **Dave Golder**

 Channing Tatum performed on rollerskates to simulate the effect of his anti-gravity boots (and it looks like it).

MINDPROBE

Douglas Booth

Titus Abrasax in
Jupiter Ascending



This is a pretty epic film. Did it feel epic shooting it, or was it actually quite intimate?

► It felt pretty epic. You're working on massive soundstages, you're taking over the whole of Chicago and flying helicopters through it and swinging actors through the streets. You're working on a big scale. The crew is five, 10 or 20 times the size of a small independent film, so you feel that scale. But you never quite appreciate what world you're creating until you see the finished film because they add a lot of it in later.

What was working with the Wachowskis like? Did they share responsibilities?

► It was the first time I actually worked with two directors so it was a new experience, but it was very seamless. They work together very well. Obviously, they've known each other since they were children so they work brilliantly together. They both have their own role but those roles cross over.

Were there any bits of filming you particularly enjoyed?

► At the beginning of the movie you see Bailem, Kalique and Titus on this planet that's been harvested. It sets the scene for the whole movie. We shot that in Bilbao, at the Guggenheim, which is an amazing museum with beautiful architecture, and they then duplicated that architecture into a whole planet. It was amazing. I've known Eddie [Redmayne] since I was 16 years old, and it was great to exist in this very surreal world together.

© GETTY (1)

It Follows

The world's slowest chase film



★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 29 June

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/download/video on demand

Director: David Robert Mitchell

Cast: Maika Monroe, Keir Gilchrist, Daniel Zovatto, Jake Weary, Olivia Luccardi, Lili Sepe



DAVID ROBERT

Mitchell's first crack at genre cinema provides a thrilling reminder that all you really need to create a low-budget horror classic is a good idea with an appealing simplicity and purity.

After Jay (Maika Monroe) has sex with a date, he chloroforms her, ties her to a chair, then apologetically drops a bombshell. From now on, he explains, Jay will be relentlessly followed by a mysterious entity which can take on any human form. Furthermore, "It" is completely invisible to anyone but its quarry.

It's not even a particularly original idea. Setting aside the screwing, there's a touch of 1957's *Night Of The Demon* – and its J-horror offspring – about the high concept. The pace of the pursuit recalls the inescapable implacability of Jason Voorhees or George Romero's zombies. And fans of *Halloween* will experience déjà vu during scenes where Jay strolls leafy suburban streets, or spies a sinister presence through a high school window.

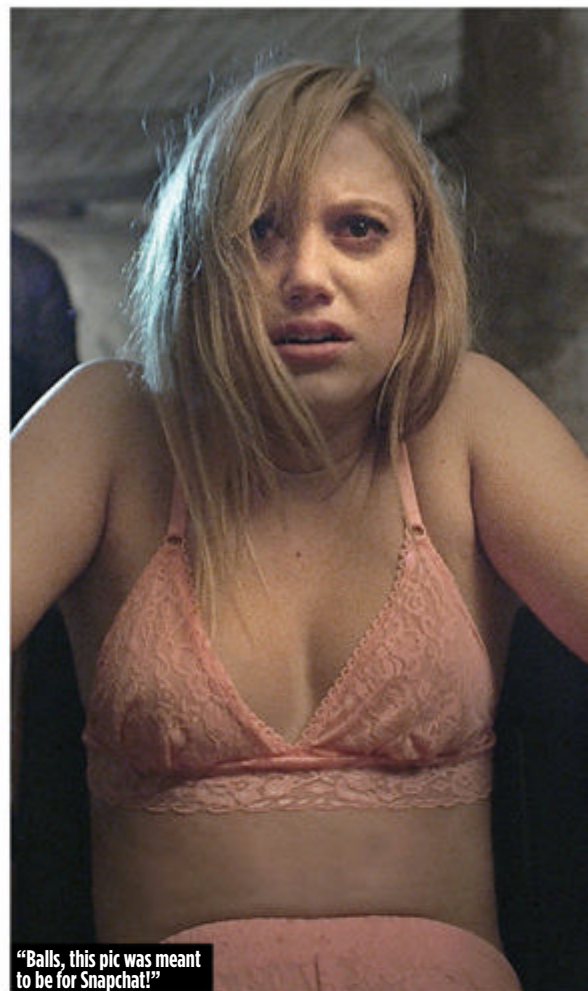
Yet somehow Mitchell makes all these faintly familiar elements feel completely fresh. It's a nail-biting experience – almost exhaustingly so, as you constantly feel compelled to scan the background of shot. Is that bloke wandering into frame just a passer-by, or is he... It? Never have extras had such an important role in a movie's success.

An obvious metaphorical reading presents itself: by losing her virginity, Jay enters the realm of adulthood, which brings with it an awareness that every moment you're alive you're being stalked by Death. But really, you could project whatever you want onto It. It's a perfect example of what Freud called *Das Unheimliche* – the Uncanny.

The only fly in the ointment is one common to movies that hinge on a curse: how do you bring the story to a satisfying conclusion? It's a problem the director doesn't manage to solve, but that doesn't prevent this film being a triumph. Wherever David Robert Mitchell's career takes him next, you'll want to follow.

EXTRAS: Film 2015's Danny Leigh and academic Mark Jancovich provide a "what the film is doing" commentary track. An interview with the composer (five minutes), a gallery and the trailer complete an underwhelming selection. **Ian Berriman**

Composer Richard Vreeland also provides the voice heard over a Tannoy in one scene.



"Balls, this pic was meant to be for Snapchat!"

Chappie

Ghost in the machine gun

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 6 July

2015 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/download

Director: Neill Blomkamp

Cast: Sharlto Copley, Dev Patel, Yolandi Visser, Ninja, Sigourney Weaver, Hugh Jackman



HOLLYWOOD

filmmakers continue to be preoccupied with artificial intelligence; *Transcendence* and *RoboCop* last year, then *Ex_Machina* and *Age Of Ultron*, *Terminator Genisys* stomping our way... heck, even *Big Hero 6* was about Baymax's sense of purpose. We'd say it was something in the water supply, except *Chappie* is South African.

The latest opus from *District 9*'s Neil Blomkamp is suffused with the director's distinctive grimy energy

and the simmering violence of a near-future Johannesburg. It's the story of programmer Deon (Dev Patel) who uses a damaged police "scout" for his experiments with consciousness, only for his creation to be stolen by gangsters and taught to commit crime. A hothead military

contractor (Hugh Jackman) exploits the situation to justify deploying his own warbot on the streets.

Blomkamp flirts with philosophy – "Maker, why would you build me just so I could die?" asks our rabbit-eared robot as his battery runs down – but struggles to sufficiently develop that, instead preferring cheap jokes about Chappie's streetwise swagger. Fortunately an endearing performance by Blomkamp's muse Sharlto Copley stops the CG lead being a metal Jar Jar Binks. It's certainly hard to like

any of the other characters in the film, who all seem either cartoonishly villainous or naive.

Although the bullet-filled climax is thrilling the film is mostly a muddle, not really clear whether it wants to be a comedy or a tragedy – an ironic absence of self-knowledge for a film about the search for identity.

EXTRAS: The DVD has just "We Are Tetravaal", a six-minute featurette about casting, with a heap of love for Sigourney Weaver despite her small role. The Blu-ray (rated) adds an alternate ending and one extended scene, plus eight more behind-the-scenes featurettes (TBC minutes) on subjects such as the motion capture, the weapons, the design of Chappie, the stunts, the scriptwriting process, the Johannesburg locations, creating an authentic gangster world, and the state of the art in real-life robotics. There's also an art and photo gallery, plus a multi-part deconstruction of how one scene was choreographed (27 minutes). **Dave Bradley**

Watch "Tetra Vaal" and "Tempbot", two shorts which were a precursor to *Chappie*, at bit.ly/tetravaal and bit.ly/tempbot.



Well, those sideburns are in need of trimming.

The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya

Poetry in animation

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 13 July

2013 | PG | Double-play Blu-ray & DVD/Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Isao Takahata

Cast: Chloë Grace Moretz, Darren Criss, Lucy Liu, James Caan, Mary Steenburgen, George Segal



FORM AND meaning.

Were Pixar to make an animated version of 10th century Japanese folk tale *Princess Kaguya* – aka *The Tale Of The Bamboo Cutter* – it would, no doubt, be awesome. Wonderfully crafted and full of heart. It would also be CG, hyperrealistic and packed with incredible detail.

Studio Ghibli's *The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya* has all the heart, emotion and *joie de vivre*, but it has something else too: a visual poetry. It achieves this with a few scratchy lines, a pastel palette and an aching love of nature. This is the Japanese woodcut in motion. It makes the film feel more authentic, more

resonant; as if the essence of the tale has been mystically imprinted on celluloid. The form has become the meaning. Which may sound a little pretentious but honestly, this film gets you like that.

The tale begins with an aged, childless bamboo cutter and his wife adopting a fast-growing child born from a bamboo shoot. Believing she's destined to be a princess, they use some equally fortuitously-discovered gold to fund a move to the city and lessons for her to become a decorous Japanese lady. She, though, just wants to play with mud and have fun with friends. But when powerful suitors learn of her beauty her fate appears sealed.

This is not a film for children. It's bum-shufflingly long, glacially slow-moving and relies on storytelling techniques that demand interpretation. For more mature viewers, though, it's a lyrical, affecting experience that works on an almost impressionistic



She slept alright until the clapping started.

level much of the time. It's rarely laugh-out-loud funny, but little touches of wry humour bring the characters alive.

The film is even more effective viewed in the original Japanese. Even if you normally avoid subtitles, they're worth the effort here. It's all

part of the form creating the meaning, y'see.

EXTRAS: Forty minutes of footage from a press conference, plus trailers and TV spots. **Dave Golder**

The Tale Of The Bamboo Cutter is thought to be the oldest Japanese prose narrative in existence, dating from the 10th century.

Thunderbirds Are Go Volume One

Five! 4! 3! 2! Win!

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2015 | U | DVD

Directors: David Scott, Theo Baynton

Cast: Rasmus Hardiker, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, David Menkin, Rosamund Pike, Angel Coulby, Kayvan Novak, David Graham



IT'S HARD TO imagine how ITV's new *Thunderbirds* show could be a better tribute to Gerry Anderson's classic original. Sure,

there are changes – International Rescue's been given a CGI makeover, and it's been retooled for modern attention spans – but the essence of the series remains the same. That a 50-year-old premise can still feel fresh shows how ahead of its time *Thunderbirds* was.

Thunderbirds Are Go works because it's made with total love for

the source material. As in the original, the (remarkably faithful) hardware and launch sequences are the real stars of the show, and they're shot beautifully.

With episodes half the length of their 1965 counterparts, this

action-packed show moves at one hell of a lick, and there are no more than a couple of dud stories in the run. Indeed, the writing team have come up with some truly inventive rescue missions, with "Skyhook" (in which the Tracy brothers attempt to rescue a ship that's falling upwards) a masterclass in high-concept storytelling.

The weak link is the characterisation. While the Tracy Island line-up has been given an update – patriarch Jeff is presumed dead and space resident John is now de facto leader – efforts to make the

altruistic siblings more distinct from one another prove a little oversimplistic. And while the move to make Tin-Tin (now Kayo) part of the team with her own Thunderbird is welcome, those good intentions fall flat when she's subsequently woefully underused.

Yet these are relatively minor quibbles. This is as FAB a reboot as we could have hoped for, with plenty to satisfy International Rescue fans old and new. So why the hell did ITV banish it to 8.00am on a Saturday morning?

EXTRAS: None. **Richard Edwards**



Nineteen cans of Red Bull later, the boys were ready.

DRINKING GAME

TAKE A SWIG WHEN...

- The Tracys' plan A for a rescue fails.
- The Tracys' plan B for a rescue fails.
- Parker references his "misspent youth".
- The original show's 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 countdown gets wheeled out.
- The Hood laughs maniacally/screams in anger.
- There's a homage to a vintage movie/television series that'll go over most of the target audience's head.



Dolph Lundgren flashes the flesh in *Masters Of The Universe*.

Electric Boogaloo

Cannon fodder

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 13 July

2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Mark Hartley

Interviewees: Tobe Hooper, Luigi Cozzi, Bo Derek, Pete Walker, Just Jaeckin, Franco Nero



SUBTITLED THE Wild, Untold Story Of Cannon Films, this enjoyable documentary concerns the studio that brought you the loveably ropery '80s likes of *Lifeforce*, *Masters Of The Universe*, *Superman IV*, and many more.

Israeli cousins Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus were the pair behind the outfit. "They treated you like a favourite child or were mean and made you fear for your career," one of the scores of interviewees recalls. Others say the producers were reckless outlaws with no scruples, and their output had a very basic function: "There were cinemas out there that needed to be

filled with something and that's what they did." One labels Golan "Jabba the Hutt".

This gives you an idea of the film's main theme: movie types moaning about how awful Golan and Globus were. But, then, it wasn't them gambling their money or doing the deals and taking daily risks. To be fair, director Mark Hartley notes that the duo also gave opportunities to arthouse directors like John Cassavetes and Franco Zeffirelli. Zeffirelli says they were the best producers he ever worked for.

A highly watchable breakneck succession of anecdotes – ones concerning Sharon Stone and Sylvia Kristel are especially juicy – *Electric Boogaloo* gives you lots of grins followed by the uncontrollable urge to go and watch some of the featured movies. Job done.

EXTRAS: None. **Russell Lewin**

At the original test screening of 1989 Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle *Cyborg*, just one in a hundred of the audience liked it!



The latest DFS sale was the most astounding yet.

Invaders From Mars

Hooper loopy

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 13 July

1986 | PG | Blu-ray

Director: Tobe Hooper

Cast: Karen Black, Hunter Carson, Timothy Bottoms, Laraine Newman, James Karen, Bud Cort, Louise Fletcher



REMAKES OF '50S favourites were all the rage in the '80s. Of them all, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* director Tobe Hooper's

Invaders From Mars (produced by schlockbuster specialists Cannon) is one of the least well-regarded. Which seems a little harsh.

It follows the original closely, with a boy spotting a UFO landing, noticing his parents are acting oddly, realising they're under alien control, and leading the Marines in an attack on a buried spaceship.

The 1953 film is basically *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* for kids; told very much from a child's perspective, it plays on the fear that

parents or teachers might suddenly turn against you. The remake seems more aimed at ironic adults, with added swearing, OTT performances and goofy gags – here, young David rumbles that his teacher's been taken over when he finds her gobbling down a frog!

It'll probably appeal to modern kids far more than the '50s version, though, thanks to Stan Winston's weird creature designs. Great ambulatory bollocks with daggers for teeth, they're a memorable upgrade on the original's men-in-green-velour. So while *Invaders From Mars* can't match *The Thing* or *The Fly* it's certainly up there with 1988's *The Blob* for sheer fun.

EXTRAS: Interviews with the concept artist, the production designer, an effects guy and a "Cannon associate", plus a look at some concept art. **Ian Berriman**

Actor Jimmy Hunt, who played the kid in the original film, plays the police chief in the remake.

ROUND-UP

THE AVENGERS SERIES FIVE

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1967 | PG | Blu-ray



The digital restorations of *The Avengers'* first run in glorious colour finally make it to Blu-ray. NB: some guides consider these 24 episodes to comprise both seasons five and six. The stories themselves increasingly step further into the fantastic and tales like "Epic" and "The Winged Avenger" are delightfully absurd. We said: "Perhaps too many episodes follow a too-similar formula, and some of the scripts don't quite have the pace and invention of the best of season four. But this is television that doesn't come along very often: bold, original and visionary. It could only have been made in Britain and it could only have been made in the '60s."

BIGGLES: ADVENTURES IN TIME

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1986 | PG | Blu-ray



Shamelessly bastardising WE Johns's RAF pilot (hero of a series of books), this low-budget effort welds together *Back To The Future* and *Indiana Jones*-style adventure, then sets them to the strains of cheesy power synths from Yes's Jon Anderson. Turns out Biggles has a "time twin" in '80s New York, who's repeatedly zapped back to 1917 to help the plucky hero destroy a German sonic weapon. It's corny, relegates Biggles to a secondary character, and the effects have dated, but there's some effective aerial photography, and the film hurls you back and forth so rapidly you don't have too much time to dwell on the stupidity of it all.

MERCY

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | DVD



The Walking Dead's Chandler Riggs (Carl Grimes) stars in this adaptation of Stephen King story "Gramma", directed by Peter Cromwell, helmer of *The Haunting In Connecticut*. A single mother and her two sons move in with the boys' senile grandma. Soon strange things start occurring and family secrets are uncovered; turns out Granny made a pact with summat 'orrible... Riggs carries the film well, inter-familial banter provides plenty of quirky humour, and when the film enters darker territory it's pretty creepy – though there's some dreadful CGI, and King fans may be annoyed to find that the story's ending has been fiddled with.

TWISTED TALES

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | DVD



This anthology horror started off as a nine-part web series for defunct cable network FEARnet, which explains why it has such an arduous running time (142 minutes). Maybe two of the unrelated segments are vaguely entertaining: "Cached" in which a thief soon regrets stealing a tablet that turns out to be haunted, and "BOOM" in which, consumed by jealousy, a military explosives expert builds a bomb to get back at his wife. As a whole, the anthology is plagued by poor production values, bad dialogue and uneven performances. *Masters Of Horror* did this sort of thing a lot better a few years back.

The Death Of Superman Lives: What Happened?

From Krypton to development hell

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 9 July

2015 | Video on demand

Director: Jon Schnepf

Interviewees: Tim Burton, Jon Peters, Kevin Smith, Colleen Atwood, Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Rick Heinrichs



IMAGINE A TIME, if you can, when cinemas were not filled with superhero movies. This dark epoch has a name: the '90s.

Following the spectacular flop of *Superman IV: The Quest For Peace*, producer Jon Peters and director Tim Burton planned to revitalise the Man of Steel's fortunes with *Superman Lives*, inspired by the popular *Death Of Superman* comic storyline. But just before the film was due to start production, with Nicolas Cage in the lead, Warner Bros pulled the plug.

Jon Schnepf's documentary looks at what might have been had *Superman Lives*, er, lived, via interviews with Peters and Burton,



"Well I don't know, do you know?" He doesn't know.

screenwriters Kevin Smith, Dan Gilroy and Wesley Strick, and a host of artists and designers. Kevin Smith's stories about his script meetings with Peters are hilarious (giant spiders abound) while the chance to see so much of the spectacular concept art created for the film is wonderful. Notable by his absence is Nicolas Cage, although this blow is softened somewhat by the inclusion of costume test footage that captures the actor and Burton chatting about the character.

Since there was never a final script, the picture that emerges of Burton's vision remains fuzzy, but his regret at never being able to realise his interpretation of Superman is palpable and, watching this, all too easy to share. **David West**

Superman Lives was set to feature Lex Luthor, Doomsday and Brainiac. First choice for Brainiac was Christopher Walken.

The Woman In Black: Angel Of Death

Going down Hill

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 13 July

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD/download (6 July)

Director: Tom Harper

Cast: Phoebe Fox, Jeremy Irvine, Helen McCrory, Adrian Rawlins, Leanne Best, Ned Dennehy



HAMMER FILMS was never shy about revisiting ideas, as lists of its Dracula films and Frankenstein movies can attest. So in a way

it's pleasing to see that tradition continued. But this follow-up to the revived brand's adaptation of Susan Hill's haunted house novella has no pressing reason to exist.

Faithfulness isn't a problem; Hill herself suggested directions in which the story could go next. We return to Eel Marsh House circa 1940, as it becomes home to a party of evacuated children. Soon teacher Eve (Phoebe Fox) has awakened the vengeful spirit, and the "accidental" deaths start stacking up.



He was never using the bathroom after his brother again.

The period setting is skilfully presented, the fog-shrouded locations are atmospheric, and there are moments of gothic beauty – like a sequence where Eve frantically chases the titular wraith through a tangled wood. Fox is also rather good in the central role, particularly when interacting with Jeremy Irvine's handsome pilot.

This romantic dimension is more interesting than the supernatural one, which, with its bumps in the night, creaky doors and sudden jolts all feels a tad too familiar – doubly so if you've seen the 2012 film.

EXTRAS: A deleted scene provides an additional shock as a lightbulb explodes. Gasp! There's also a Making Of and five short featurettes. **Ian Berriman**

Susan Hill believes in ghosts: "there are too many incidents and places that have a dreadful feeling about them, a sense of evil."

Tokyo Tribe

When lots of tribes go to war

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Sion Sono

Cast: Tomoko Karina, Akihiro Kihara, Ryohei Suzuki, Shota Somatani, Riki Takeuchi



JAPANESE dystopian rap opera. Those are four words we bet you never thought you'd hear together. But that's exactly what Japanese cinema's enfant terrible Sion Sono (think Quentin Tarantino with fewer inhibitions) has concocted here.

In a crumbling near-future Tokyo a huge number of rival gangs of rappers are in a constant turf war. They rap constantly too. This isn't a musical, it's opera, sung throughout.

The plot... well, it hardly warrants summarising, as it's virtually non-existent and near incoherent, about as pure an exercise in style over substance as you'll find. Often it's more stylised than stylish, but there are moments when the blend of music and visuals becomes the primal, driving power of the movie.



If in doubt, gold-plate the guns.

It's bonkers in a way only Japanese films can be. It's lewd and crude and has a level of toilet humour that makes *Viz* look like *The Spectator*. The main villains overact like it's an Olympic sport. The action is unapologetically cartoony. The result is very nearly a live-action anime. With rapping.

While it's clearly not lampooning rap culture – many of the cast are famous Japanese rappers – when it so readily embraces the misogynistic and gun-culture excesses of US rap the result leaves a sour taste.

One thing's for sure – you've never seen anything quite like it.

EXTRAS: An hour's-worth of behind-the-scenes footage from the shoot, four deleted scenes and a trailer. **Dave Golder**

Sion Sono's next project is a documentary on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster... with the help of art collective Chim-Pom.

Falling Skies Season Four

Fly Me To The Moon

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 6 July

2014 | 15 | Blu-ray/DVD

Showrunner: David Eick

Cast: Noah Wyle, Moon Bloodgood, Drew Roy, Connor Jessup, Maxim Knight



FOUR YEARS IN, the Spielberg-spawned show about humans resisting alien invaders

continues to be a solid, modestly entertaining series that may dress itself in the rags of post-apocalyptic drama but has far more faith in the essential decency of humanity than most.

The formula's now cosily familiar: expect speeches about the importance of family, big hugs, and even bigger explosions. But the production team have found a reliable way to spray on some narrative Febreze: once again, the season opens by leaping forward several months, fracturing the family of the Second Mass as they split into three story strands.



Who'd have thought you'd find Bigfoot out here?

It's not the most subtle show: one new innovation is an alien academy brainwashing kids; it's painstakingly explained that this is a *bit Hitler Youth*. Nor always the most credible: the Espheni can transmit electricity across space, but the forcefields around their prison camps are still powered by a really big cable.

Still, there are enough new developments to keep you involved, and the anti-heroic Pope adds welcome friction. Plus the finale, which sends rebel leader Tom Mason on a mission to the flippin' Moon, is entertainingly barking.

EXTRAS: Featurette "Tom Mason: A Man Of Tomorrow", the 2014 Comic Con panel and short "Inside The Episode" pieces, cast interviews and "prequels". **Ian Berriman**

Falling Skies' ten-episode-long fifth and final season starts airing on Fox in the UK on Tuesday 30 June.

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Tatau

Ink too deep

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2015 | 15 | DVD

Creator: Richard Zajdlic

Cast: Joe Layton, Theo Barklem-Biggs, Shushila Takao, Temuera Morrison, Cian Elyse White, Alexander Tarrant



FOR ONE EPISODE, BBC Three's *Supernatural Death In Backpackers' Paradise* looks like it could be a really good show.

Oddly, that episode is neither the first nor the last.

Usually, derivative old tosh like this either starts off promisingly then nosedives, or suddenly perks up in the last episode, way too late to alter its descent into TV obscurity. *Tatau* does neither. It starts off as it ends, as a feeble, listless supernatural thriller with little to offer other than a legion of half-dressed, good-looking twentysomethings.

If you've ever seen any supernatural children's shows which start with the kids going on holiday somewhere new and strange, you've seen *Tatau* before. Sure, there are more rude words and there's a smidgen more violence but essentially this is identikit juvenile spooky drama, somewhere between *Scooby-Doo* and *Century Falls* and not as fun or inventive as either.

A backpacker with a mysterious tattoo (he just liked the design) travels to the Cook Islands with his comedy sidekick mate where, one drug-induced hallucination later, he becomes involved in a Maori-themed murder mystery. What

Tatau has one saving grace: the comedy sidekick



The trip to the tailors was a complete failure.

follows is the white guy continually trying to convince the victim in his vision that someone is going to kill her, but failing because he's acting like a crazed lunatic. There's a Maori Obi-Wan urging him on, a bit of romance, a nutty vicar, biker gangs and lots of running about, but the plot barely moves forward for episodes on end.

Tatau has one saving grace: the comedy sidekick is actually funny and he's not a geek, just a lascivious

yob. In episode six he's in a coma, and becomes a spirit to help out his handsome but charm-free mate. Suddenly, for 40 minutes, the show becomes *Randall And Hopkirk (Deceased) Do Club 18-30* and it's genuinely amusing.

Sadly it's nowhere near enough to make up for the other seven episodes.

EXTRAS: None. **Dave Golder**

Tatau executive producer Rob Pursey used to be the bassist in twee '80s indie-pop bands Tallulah Gosh and Heavenly.

Project Almanac

Time tripping

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 12 | Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Dean Israelite

Cast: Johnny Weston, Sofia Black-D'Elia, Ginny Gardner, Amy Landecker, Katie Garfield



THE GEEK

heroes of this breezy, undemanding time travel tale come prepped for quantum cliché. "You have to kill Hitler!" says one. "Have you never seen *Timecop*?" asks another. Someone references the rules of "Terminators 1 through 4". Someone else declares "Boom! We're Doctor Who!" If only it was that easy, kids.

In truth *Project Almanac* feels like an '80s Amblin movie reengineered for Generation Y. It has the wide-eyed, sweet-natured vibe of *Explorers* or an episode of Spielberg's *Amazing Stories*, its wish-fulfilment premise distilled into a single line of dialogue: "So you're telling me dad left a time machine in the basement?"

Stumbling upon this experimental piece of military tech, the kids go



But can it get London Weekend Television?

wild in the fourth dimension. Well, no, they hit a Lollapalooza festival they missed. And fix high school indignities. And run down a street, yesterday, whooping, as if on a giant Red Bull rush. Because, y'know, time travel, bro.

It's shot found-footage style, and while that gives the teenage byplay an endearing immediacy – we hear every classroom mumble and aside – it's never quite used cleverly enough. In fact it turns intimacy into social media storytelling. By the end of this sunlit, upbeat, Pepsi-ad time trip you'll feel like history – and hell – is other people's Instagram feeds.

EXTRAS: An alternate opening; two alternate endings; eight deleted scenes. **Nick Setchfield**

A brief shot of a plane crashing was cut after it emerged it used real footage from a 1994 US Air Force crash.

Burying The Ex

The Evelyn Dead

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | Download/view-on-demand

Director: Joe Dante

Cast: Anton Yelchin, Ashley Greene, Alexandra Daddario, Oliver Cooper



IF YOU ONLY

watch one movie about a girlfriend returning as a zombie this year... don't make it this one.

It's no pleasure to report that this zom-com trails in second even in such a limited field, because Joe Dante is someone your average *SFX* reader roots for. The guy brought us *Gremlins* and *Piranha*, and is irrepressibly enthusiastic about our genre. Sadly, *Burying The Ex* is not a triumphant return to form.

For starters, the basic concept feels fairly offensive, with domineering, jealous eco-fanatic Evelyn hit by a bus, then returned to bossy life. Presumably we're meant to empathise with Anton Yelchin's under-the-thumb horror store employee Max, but his inaction (and willingness to overlook his partner's flaws when she's dressing up as a



Always use a serviette.

"Naughty Nurse") screams "man-child douchebag". Secondly, unless you find the mere thought of necrophilia screaming funny, it's not that amusing.

Dante also over-indulges his fanboy impulses; there's constantly something in the background, be it a TV showing *Plan 9 From Outer Space* or a poster for *Robot Monster*, reminding you that you could be watching something else.

Ageing male geeks who daydream of ditching their "ball and chain" for a hot rock chick with implausibly niche knowledge of horror-themed 1970s breakfast cereals may find this an appealing wish-fulfilment fantasy. Anyone else should watch *Life After Beth* instead.

EXTRAS: None. **Ian Berriman**

Death Race 2000 star/Andy Warhol associate Mary Woronov had a role as the owner of Max's store, but it was cut.

The Happiness Of The Katakuris

The Sound Of Demented Music

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2001 | 15 | Dual-format Blu-ray/DVD

Director: Takashi Miike

Cast: Kenji Sawada, Keiko Matsuzaka, Shinji Takeda, Naomi Nishida, Kiyoshirō Imawano, Tetsurō Tanba



TO CULT FILM fans in the west, the revelation that Takashi Miike (*Ichii The Killer*) once directed a musical is like learning that Tarantino's

directing the next *Smurfs* movie. Nevertheless it happened. And while *The Happiness Of The Katakuris* certainly has its weird and dark moments at heart it's a very trad musical. A burst of "The hills are alive..." would not feel out of place.

The dysfunctional Katakuris buy a guest house in the mountains. Unfortunately all their guests keep dying. Seeing as this might not be good publicity for the place, instead of informing the police, they bury the bodies.



Watch out for cow pats.

In one sense there is no fantasy element here. However, the musical sequences are often surreal, plus the film randomly leaps into bizarre, gothic stopmotion animation sequences that are mini masterpieces in themselves. It also features the best dancing zombies since "Thriller". It's all delightfully odd and yet has a truly endearing, heartwarming element to it too.

EXTRAS: This is the first time the film's been available on Blu-ray, and it looks superb. There's a Miike commentary, another by a film critic, and a Miike "visual essay" by the same guy. You also get an hour-long Making Of, a brief featurette on the claymation sequences, cast and crew interviews, trailers and specially commissioned booklet. **Dave Golder**

Star Kenji Sawada, once lead singer of a band called The Tigers, is a huge Julie Andrews fan.

Digging Up The Marrow

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2014 | 15 | DVD



DO YOU LIKE

Adam Green's face?

You do? Good, because about 78% of this mockumentary is the *Hatchet* director looking confused to camera.

Green plays himself, the director of numerous indie shockers. He meets a supposed former detective (Ray Wise) who claims he's found a portal to the Marrow – a realm with *real* monsters. Intrigued, he decides to shoot a film. The result is a playful cross between *Nightbreed* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

Despite endless promotion for other Green productions, *Marrow* is flimsy fun – if not actually creepy. There are ironic jabs at the found-footage genre, a few amusing cameos from the likes of Kane "Jason" Hodder, and Wise is always watchable.

EXTRAS: Deleted scene, behind-the-scenes feature. **Will Salmon**

Killer Mermaids

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 29 June

2014 | 18 | DVD



IT'S A GLORIOUS grindhouse title – but an equally shameless bait-and-switch. There's only one killer mermaid in this

Serbian horror and she doesn't arrive on screen for an hour. But the film's original title – *Nymph* – feels even less appropriate.

For all its intriguing hints of oceanic mythology, this is, at grisly heart, a slasher flick. A group of friends explore an island that is, we're told, "drenched in blood" (doesn't TripAdvisor warn against this kind of thing?). Soon they're stalked by a harpoon-wielding killer who brings a distinct John Carpenter vibe, breaking the monotony of all the Spielberg-homaging underwater POV shots.

You want it to be *Splash* with bite but the action quickly devolves into a stabby runaround, the underdeveloped fantasy elements clashing with the bloodletting.

EXTRAS: None. **Nick Setchfield**

Trancers II

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1991 | 15 | Blu-ray



TRANCERS WAS journeyman director Charles Band's finest moment; sadly this follow-up to his 1985 cult

favourite isn't quite as entrancing.

Once again, wisecracking future-cop Jack Deth (Tim Thomerson) must protect the rulers of the future from erasure. This time he's pitted against the brother of the previous villain (Richard Lynch), and aided by his dead wife (don't ask).

There's disappointingly little of the *Tesco Value Blade Runner* vibe that gave the first film an edge, and too much emphasis on comedy – much of it centring on the eye-rolling conceit that Deth's now being fought over by two young women. But no movie where the hero foils an assassination attempt by throwing an exploding ham through a window can be all bad.

EXTRAS: Commentary; Making Of; bloopers; gallery. **Ian Berriman**

Unhallowed Ground

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: 13 July

2014 | 15 | DVD



IF THE FILM industry followed a Darwinian model, surely by now we'd be almost free of mediocre low-budget horror movies. Do enough people really watch them for others to be inspired to make more? It seems so.

This British effort features a group of schoolkids who, following term's end, spend the night patrolling their alma mater as part of an army training exercise. But not only is it being targeted by burglars, an ancient spirit is on the prowl too. How scary!

Well, no, not really: supernatural stuff is low in the mix and the action develops along very familiar lines. The young cast – including Roman Polanski's daughter Morgane and *EastEnders'* Thomas Law – try hard, but the script lacks zip, colour and variety. A fail, sadly.

EXTRAS: Trailer. **Russell Lewin**

Zombieworld

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2015 | 18 | DVD



THIS

portmanteau horror takes 13 shorts from around the globe and stitches them together with the flimsy connective tissue of a news anchor reporting on the end of the world.

It's a grab-bag of styles, some serious, most silly – and they don't fit together well. Spanish short "Fist Of Jesus" finds the son of God fighting cowboy zombies with a swordfish. It's the best of the bunch, but outstays its welcome. Others, like "Dead Stop", are barely stories at all – simply gory scenes. The intermittent "How To Survive" PSAs, meanwhile, are uninspired.

Taken on their own, most of these shorts would be diverting for five minutes. Jammed together, they soon lose their appeal.

EXTRAS: "Marathon Apocalypse", another short designed to advertise real-life Montreal running event Apocalypse 5k. **Will Salmon**

Vice

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2015 | 18 | Blu-ray/DVD

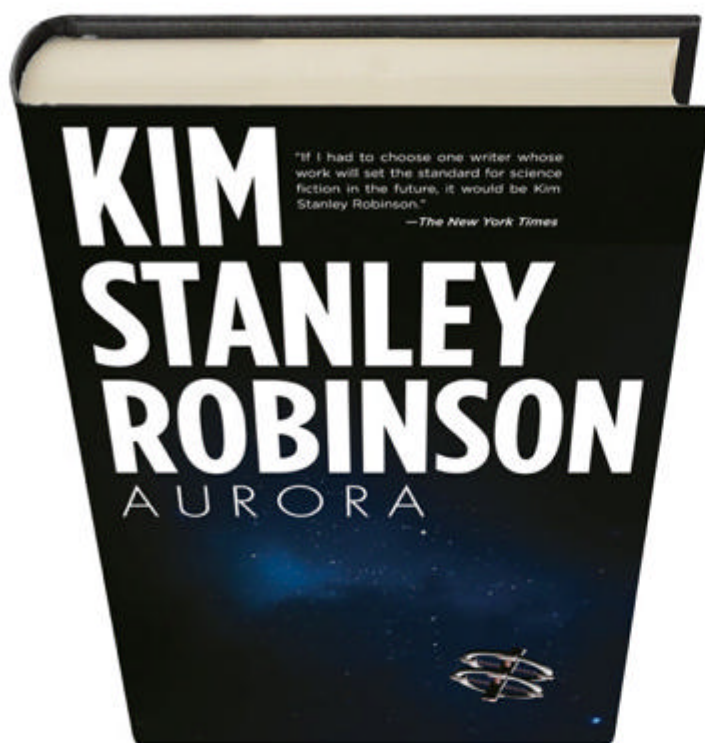


IF THE

presence of Bruce Willis's name above the title of this SF thriller makes you think it's a big and oddly overlooked studio picture, then the makers of *Vice* have pulled their canny con off. This is a bottom-shelf cheapo, a dunder-headed exploitation quickie with faint echoes of *Westworld* and *Blade Runner* in its story of sex androids servicing their clients' rape and murder fantasies.

It's a juicy sci-fi premise, but not one that the writers of *Vice* ever explore, instead fashioning their script as an artless chase movie, populated by cliché thriller cyphers. Thomas Jane looks embarrassed, and Willis simply bored. In the career of the *Die Hard* star, *Vice* ranks somewhere below his adverts for Sky Broadband.

EXTRAS: Commentary by the director and two stars; behind-the-scenes featurette. **Steve O'Brien**



Aurora

Light years from home



★★★★★

Release Date: 9 July
470 pages | Hardback/paperback/ebook
Author: Kim Stanley Robinson
Publisher: Orbit

THE GENERATION STARSHIP

novel is a staple of science fiction, a meta-story that authors from different eras revisit and reinvent. But certain essential, and contradictory, elements remain. The idea of a craft that will take a century or more to reach its destination is simultaneously stirring and scary, expansive and claustrophobic, majestic yet hubristic.

It's therefore not surprising that Kim Stanley Robinson, an SF novelist who's always delighted in the tension between humankind's notions about the universe and the way the universe actually works (so far as we can tell...), would be drawn to the form. What was far less predictable was that Robinson would craft a book that can be read as the embodiment of the idea that in order to break the rules, you have to understand them first.

To put that another way, *Aurora* is in key respects one of Robinson's

most conventional novels. Here, you won't find misfits living in the harshest wilderness (as in *Antarctica*) or heretic proto-scientists glimpsing the future (*Galileo's Dream*). Instead, you'll find what you'd expect: people living on a sub-light speed starship, forced to cooperate as they travel through space towards a distant star system.

Things aren't going as planned. There's underlying tension on the ship, revealed as we follow Freya, the daughter of chief engineer Devi, on a kind of gap-year tour of the ship's different habitats, each of which recreates a different Earth eco-system. Then there's the physical state of the ship itself. While it's a magnificent piece of engineering, it's been in space for decades. As if it were a kind of grand version of Biosphere II (an attempt to build a fully self-sufficient vivarium out in the Arizona desert that didn't go so well) it's starting to fail. Turns out such factors as build-ups of moisture, slow chemical reactions and unexpected fluctuations in mineral concentrations are huge problems when you're light years from home

and can't nip out to B&Q for the bits and bobs needed to effect repairs.

Things get stranger still when the ship approaches its destination. Simply, it's hard to live on another world for which you're not evolved. This isn't exactly an unfamiliar notion within recent SF, but Robinson's approach to exploring the idea – to have the would-be settlers' travails related by the ship's AI, which initially struggles with the very idea of creating a narrative – emphasises the sheer weirdness, the other-worldliness, of the exercise.

More importantly, the ploy of having an outsider narrator, or at least a non-human one who's intimately involved in the lives of humankind, also serves to take some of the moral questions Robinson tackles outside familiar frames of reference. Do we have the right to volunteer generations ahead for lives built on wild dreams and chances? Can humankind ever make a home so far from Mother Earth? And by implication, because all SF is at some level about right now and because environmental concerns lie at the centre of Robinson's work, have we got the right to despoil a biosphere that generations ahead will rely upon?

Not that Robinson explores such themes in pedagogic fashion. Instead, by expertly tinkering with

Packed with big ideas, wonders and jeopardy

the form of the generation starship novel, breaking the rules as he makes it not about brave explorers but accidental heroes trying to get by as best they can, he nudges you off balance, forces you to look anew at familiar ideas and tropes.

The results, it has to be said, may not be to everyone's taste. Indeed, until around 100 pages in, this is a book that takes a while – perhaps too long – to gather momentum. No matter, because the wider achievement here, crafting an accessible yet subtly experimental novel packed with big ideas, wonders, jeopardy and, at the end, a real emotional punch, is considerable. In its understated way, one of Robinson's best novels.

Jonathan Wright

Robinson first got interested in SF when, as a teenager, he got Clifford D Simak's *The Goblin Reservation* out of the library.



Snuff

Modern Russian satire

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

480 pages | Hardback/paperback/ebook
Author: Victor Pelevin
Publisher: Gollancz

DURING THE TIME OF THE

Soviet Union, science fiction was a favoured genre for writers to obliquely criticise the regime without censure. Those days have not quite returned under Putin, but *Snuff* performs a similar job, artfully satirising modern Russia's divided society and its strange relationship with the truth.

Damilola Karpov is a pilot of a hybrid media/military drone who lives in the flying city of Byzantion. "Big Byz" is anchored forever over the capital of Urkaina, a miserable land in a climate-changed Siberia. Karpov's role is to simultaneously start ritualised wars with the "Orks" of Urkaina and report on them. Between times, he relaxes with his sex robot Kaya – a realistic "rubber woman" whose personality settings he's tinkered with to make her act as realistically as possible. These two strands are central to the novel's discourse on the nature of truth, and how we con ourselves as much as the state does as to what that actually means.

A sort of brilliantly inverted *Brave New World*, this is a quintessentially Russian novel populated by characters who possess redeeming features, but who are mostly terrible human beings. There are wry observations on the human condition in every paragraph, drenched in irony. It's a little too dense at times, the balance between philosophy and plot not quite perfect, but otherwise this is a great example of satirical SF, and expertly translated too. **Guy Haley**

SNUFF is an acronym for Special Newsreel/ Universal Feature Film, which is what the footage shot by Karpov's drone is called.

The Long Utopia

One more step beyond

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

368 pages | Hardback/ebook

Authors: Terry Pratchett, Stephen Baxter

Publisher: Doubleday

CAN WE EVER TRULY ESCAPE

our responsibilities? Or more subtly, take on new responsibilities while leaving behind a former life? Not, it seems, if you're the AI reincarnation of a Tibetan motorcycle repairman and you've relocated to an exotic Earth where, despite your protests that all you really want to do is live the rural life, events are about to turn very peculiar indeed.

Welcome again to the parallel worlds of Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter's *Long Earth* sequence, where if you don't like the neighbours, there's always the option of stepping to another version of home. Except, as AI-turned-farmer Lobsang is about to discover, some neighbours can't be safely left behind, not when they pose an existential threat to humanity – and



to the super-intelligent Next, aka humanity 2.0, for that matter.

It's time to get the old crew together, which is how we come to re-encounter not just Lobsang but "natural stepper" Joshua Valiente, uploaded nun Sister Agnes and Sally Linsay, who's adept at finding "soft places", shortcuts between worlds.

And it's good to meet them all again in a novel that breaks with the formula of earlier books where the journey, the idea of stepping ever further from "Datum Earth", was so often the thing. This time around, as

well as the threat-driven main story, we learn much about Joshua Valiente's Victorian forebears, and there's plenty too on how human society might change when there's so much room to roam.

In this context, a recurring theme is the way people might react to the end of scarcity, to the end even of needing to work. Bored of building a space elevator in one world? Move to another. Get enough people doing this, and soon the idea of knowledge being lost becomes a real issue.

Not that this comes across overtly as a novel of ideas. Rather, as with earlier volumes, there's the sense of two enviably talented writers having fun as they play in an infinite fictional universe. Which is also, of course, a source of huge sadness because, with Terry Pratchett's death, we are never going to explore the Long Universe as fully as we might wish.

But let's be grateful for what we've got. Presuming *The Long Utopia* does prove to be the final volume, it's a fine finale. We might grumble about a few contrivances, but the authors' wit and wisdom more than compensates. **Jonathan Wright**

Terry Pratchett's 41st and final Discworld novel, The Shepherd's Crown, will be published by Transworld in September.

BULLET TIME

A BOOK IN BULLET POINTS

FIGURE FANTASY

Release Date: OUT NOW!

120 pages | Hardback

Author: Daniel Picard

Publisher: Insight Editions

- Subtitled *The Pop Culture Photography Of Daniel Picard*, this book showcases the artist/photographer's pictures of action figures and statuettes in real world situations.
- This is your chance to see Snowtroopers clearing snow off their SUVs, Harley Quinn taking a selfie and Buffy's Gentlemen taking their dogs for a walk.
- The franchise mash-ups are particularly fun – notably Tim the Enchanter from *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* giving orders to *Knights Of The Old Republic's* Darth Malgus.
- It's effectively a really classy advert for Sideshow Collectibles, as their range of figures and statuettes provides the entire cast of the book.
- There's a foreword from Simon Pegg and an afterword from Kevin Smith, both of whom are big fans of Picard's work (and the wonders of action figures).



Children Of Time

Eight Legged Tweaks

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

600 pages | Hardback/ebook

Author: Adrian Tchaikovsky

Publisher: Tor Books

FANTASY AUTHOR

Tchaikovsky (writer of the *Shadows Of The Apt* series) makes a move into outer space in this SF tale of post-catastrophe survival for the creatures of Earth. He takes his interest in arthropods with him, however.

Children Of Time begins with humanity on the verge of seeding life throughout a barren cosmos. Discord at this pretence to godhood simultaneously sees human society cast down across its fragile holdings. As war erupts, the terraforming project of Kern's World is nearing completion, and from its ruin arises a race of uplifted spiders.

This is a twin-stranded novel. The primary plot, concerning the nascent civilisation of the spiders, is the more effective, and the radically different course of technological development the arachnids take is marvellously realised. The secondary plot concerns the survivors of a



human culture that developed after the dark age that came in the wake of the war. They are forced to seek out the worlds created by their ancestors as the poisons of the past render Earth uninhabitable. This is generally gripping, although it becomes somewhat repetitive in the middle reaches.

Tchaikovsky favours a rather didactic style, laying everything out in detail. This works well for the creatures of Kern's World, but robs the narrative of a certain mystery, and the set-up requires some stretching of credibility. But overall this is a smart, involving story with a brilliantly imagined "alien" race. **Guy Haley**

Tchaikovsky is actually a Czajkowski. Of Polish descent, he uses the Russian version of his name for ease of recognition.

Virtues Of War

Spot the ironic title

★★★★★

Release Date: 26 June

448 pages | Paperback/ebook

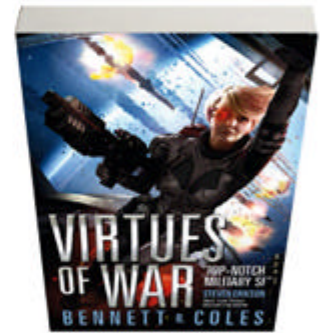
Author: Bennett R Coles

Publisher: Titan Books

A NEW AUTHOR KICKS OFF

a new trilogy, a military space epic set in an alien-free universe where war rages between Earth and its colonies. *Virtues Of War* tightens its focus to four Terran personnel – two men, two women – and their tensions and rivalries as the conflict heats up. Unfortunately, the war is envisioned more impressively than the characters.

The book starts on a provocative note, with one of the quartet – a female Lieutenant called Katja – striking into enemy territory and blowing the head off an unarmed civilian to terrorise the locals. This has the risky effect of getting much of the readership to root against Katja and her comrades (it's certainly not clear that their war is just). But it's also one of the few interesting character beats, as the plot plunges through bloody heroics and soapy love-triangles.



Some of the confrontations are more like afternoon TV catfights than gritty war drama.

Virtues Of War is most impressive in its big-canvas prose spectacle, whether on the ground or in space, with titanic kaleidoscopes of burning starships, killer droids and raining fire. (There's also a bit of stuff with higher-dimensional weapons, although the "Eureka!" moment which sparks it is unfortunately laughable.) But even in a space opera, there's a limit to how long you can applaud the scenery when the story in front of it just isn't that exciting.

Andrew Osmond

Author Bennett R Coles certainly has the CV to write military fiction – he served 15 years as an officer in the Canadian navy.

The Watchmaker Of Filigree Street

A good time



Release Date: 2 July

318 pages | Hardback/paperback/ebook

Author: Natasha Pulley

Publisher: Bloomsbury Circus

FORGET STEAMPUNK.

Welcome to tickpunk. Natasha Pulley's debut novel is a whimsical fantasy set in Victorian London, but it's clockwork not water pressure that powers the futuristic tech here.

Actually, the tick-tech is just a minor element of this offbeat tale of a Japanese watchmaker in London who appears to be able to predict the future. Thaniel Steepleton, a Home Office clerk who runs his life like clockwork, crosses paths with the mysterious Keita Mori when he's left a watch – by persons unknown – which emits an alarm just before a bomb explodes in Westminster. A clockwork bomb. Mori becomes the main suspect and Steepleton becomes part of the investigation, going undercover as the watchmaker's lodger. As a result, Steepleton becomes involved with



Japanese nationalism, Gilbert and Sullivan and an Oxford student who thinks she's worked out how to prove the existence of the ether.

Part Susanna Clarke, part Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Watchmaker Of Filigree Street* is a delightful read that benefits from wonderfully colourful characters and a lyrical prose style full of esoteric detail.

The plot sags and meanders in places, and the structure, which has occasional flashbacks inelegantly inserted, feels a little clumsy. The book's eccentricities and charm, however, make sure it remains a compelling read. **Dave Golder**

A fascinating fact we learnt from the book: a literal translation of the Japanese word for hedgehog is "needle rat".

The Just City

Bananas republic



Release Date: 2 July

368 pages | Paperback

Author: Jo Walton

Publisher: Corsair

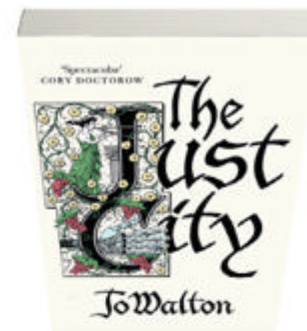
ACCORDING TO THIS

book's Notes, Jo Walton came up with the idea of time travellers attempting to set up Plato's Republic when she was 15.

Reading the resulting novel, it appears she hasn't actually thought much more about the concept in the intervening three decades. *The Just City* is an interesting idea desperately in search of a plot.

It kicks off in misleadingly quirky and lively fashion, with the god Apollo perplexed that a nymph would rather transform into a tree than accept his advances. To understand this reaction he decides to spend a lifetime incognito as a human. Handily, sister Athene is planning to use people plucked from different ages to see if they can build Plato's Republic, which seems as good a place as any to be reborn.

So far, so intriguing. Then... not a lot happens. Various near-



interchangeable characters who all speak in the same tone discuss philosophy and morality. A lot. There's barely anything approaching real drama, apart from a bit of sexual tension, and a subplot about whether robot workers are sentient is largely wasted. There's no sense of building to a climax, just a final chapter where everything suddenly falls apart, and a finger-wagging "lesson" like something from the end of an old US children's TV show.

You'll learn a lot about Plato – the word "agape" is used possibly more than "the" – but like Athene's plan, *The Just City* is a failed exercise.

Dave Golder

The character of Maia (a Victorian) is based on Ethel May in Charlotte M Yonge's 1856 novel *The Daisy Chain*.

Crashing Heaven

Master of puppets



Release Date: OUT NOW!

368 pages | Hardback/ebook

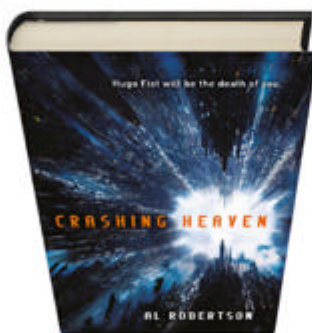
Author: Al Robertson

Publisher: Gollancz

CYBERPUNK FICTION

invariably brings with it plenty of expectations – data crime, weird tech, a noir-ish tone – but "foul-mouthed AI ventriloquist's dummies" isn't generally on the list. They're among some of the offbeat pleasures that debut novelist Al Robertson serves up in *Crashing Heaven*, a stylish blend of techno thriller and hard SF.

It's the story of Jack Forster, a man who fought on the losing side of a war between AIs and has returned to Station, an asteroid-constructed habitat orbiting a devastated Earth. Jack's mind is permanently linked with a "puppet" AI named Hugo Fist, a virtual ventriloquist's dummy who'll soon be taking possession of Jack's body thanks to a dodgy software licence. But while Jack only has limited time left, he and Fist are dragged into a mystery that's linked with the god-



like AIs who now rule humanity...

In amongst the plot's twists and turns, Robertson pulls off evocative prose and some imaginative angles on the relationship between the human and digital worlds. The opening of the book is a little rocky, overdoing the noir romanticism and Fist's swears wisecracks, but it gains confidence as it progresses, building towards an effective and impactful climax. *Crashing Heaven* doesn't quite reach the heights of mindbenders like *Altered Carbon* or *The Quantum Thief*, but it's still a satisfying widescreen adventure for those who like their SF with a darker edge. **Saxon Bullock**

Robertson is part of a band who "create soundscapes where new weird electronica meets deep-listening Lovecraftian delirium."

The Scientific Secrets Of Doctor Who

Principles behind the paradoxes



Release Date: OUT NOW!

408 pages | Hardback/ebook

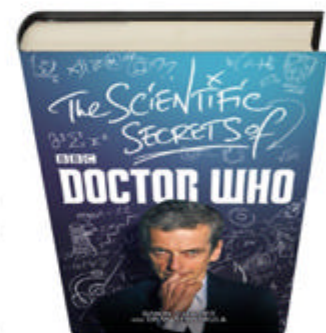
Authors: Simon Guerrier, Dr Marek Kukula

Publisher: BBC Books

PART OF DOCTOR WHO'S

original remit was to be educational – to teach young viewers about science and history. This was swiftly forgotten in the success of aliens and spaceships, of course, but that hasn't stopped generations of children being inspired by wonders they saw on screen, and several books have sought to explore the real-life science behind the fiction.

This volume contains 15 short stories, each touching on a scientific principle that's followed up with a look at the real science behind it. A touching tale by Una McCormack about a woman who absorbed the memories of a dying culture leads into a look at how our short and long term memory work, for example, while Marc "Ghost Light"



Platt's story of adapting lifeforms moves into a discussion of evolution.

The book is split into three sections – Space, Time and Humanity – and covers topics from space flight to quantum theory, AI to bodily regeneration. The science commentaries are superb, deftly explaining tricky concepts in an engaging way. The stories, sadly, are less impressive, though a few manage to stand out. "The Room With All The Doors" by James Goss is by far the best, an original and intriguing Second Doctor tale of an infinite prison of possibilities. But it's the science that's the real star of the show. **Rhian Drinkwater**

Dr Kukula works at the Royal Observatory Greenwich. Guerrier did GCSE Astronomy there as research for his *Who* fiction.

The Empress Game

Star fighter



Release Date: 10 July

362 pages | Paperback

Author: Rhonda Mason

Publisher: Titan Books

SETTING UP A FICTIONAL

universe is tricky. The world has to be familiar enough to make sense, but not too familiar; otherwise, what's the point? Rhonda Mason, whose debut novel this is, tackles the challenge head-on, creating a universe full of warring aliens, long-held grudges and weird futuristic plagues.

Interplanetary politics take centre stage here, as nobles from across the galaxy come together to take part in an ancient ritual. The rules of the Empress Game are simple – it's just a series of one-on-one fights – but with the eventual winner getting a crucial vote in the way the empire is run, the scheming that goes on behind the scenes is anything but. Our heroine is Kayla, a former pit brawler who's been brought in to impersonate a politically savvy but physically feeble princess in the



Game. The only trouble is, Kayla's already got a secret identity, and her mysterious past is about to catch up with her...

The tournament itself is pretty disappointing; it's the least interesting thing about this book, consisting of a string of repetitive matches we know Kayla won't lose. Still, the elaborately drawn backdrop of the empire means this is more than just *The Hunger Games* in space.

Maybe there wasn't enough room in this book to explore it properly, but as it's the first of a planned trilogy, all that imagination won't go to waste. **Sarah Dobbs**

Rhonda Mason's writing companion is a sleepy English bulldog by the name of Princess Gracie.

Stallo

Not the right one to let in



Release Date: OUT NOW!

587 pages | Paperback/ebook

Author: Stefan Spjut

Publisher: Faber & Faber

SUSSO MYRÉN IS A TROLL-

hunter. Not of the internet variety, though she does run a website; Susso is an amateur cryptozoologist, and the trolls she's interested in are the shapeshifting creatures of Swedish folklore. No one takes her seriously until her troll-cam snaps a photo of a weird-looking man lurking around the house of an abducted child. Then everyone's taking her seriously – including the kidnappers.

It's being marketed as ideal "for fans of *Let The Right One In*", but despite a promising set-up, *Stallo* takes way too long to get going. A missing child ought to provide a kind of ticking clock, but there's no urgency to this story; relevant information is doled out one tiny, frustrating titbit at a time, even as entire paragraphs are devoted to descriptions of characters putting on lip balm. It's a long book, and



even the use of multiple narrators can't justify the bloated page count. Flashes of cleverness, like the references to real-life fairytale illustrator John Bauer, sink hopelessly into a mire of tedium as characters drive from one end of Sweden to the other, eating breakfast and making unfunny jokes when they ought to be focusing on the mystery at hand.

The trolls themselves are creepy, but they don't do enough to seem like a genuine threat. Slog to the finish, and all you'll get is an ending so inconclusive it feels like you're the one who's just been trolled.

Sarah Dobbs

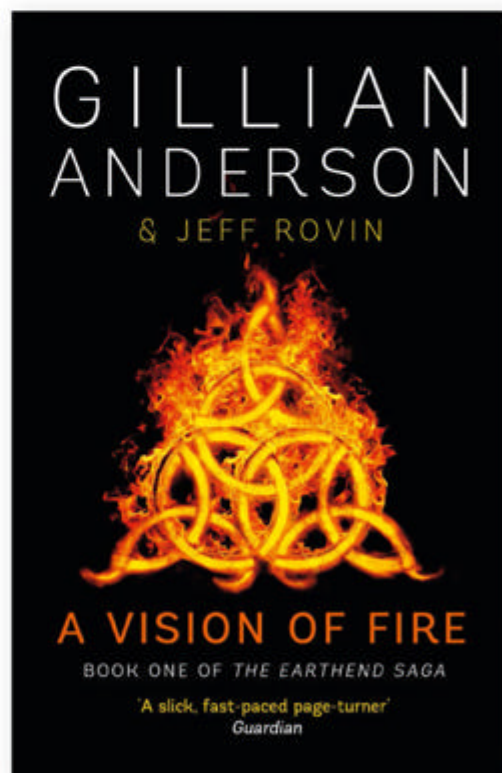
In Lapp mythology, "stallos" are giant, cruel, people-eating trolls who can usually be defeated by a quick-witted hero.

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English Gothic

A Study In Terror

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

384 pages | Hardback
Author: Jonathan Rigby
Publisher: Signum Books

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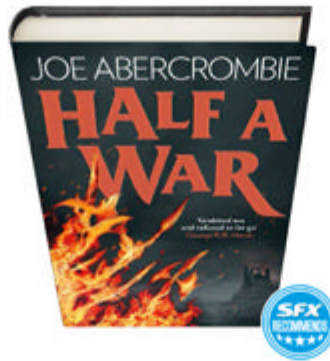
horror films, buy this. It's one of three or four books on the subject that you simply must own.

If you already have the first edition, published in 2000, upgrade, since it's been extensively updated. Fifty-five pages on horror from 2000-2015 have been added, but there are also updates sprinkled throughout.

If you *don't* own that, you've been missing out. Jonathan Rigby has an encyclopaedic knowledge of British horror, but more importantly he's a good writer; he has an engagingly sardonic tone, a keen eye for a trend, and understands that a synopsis does *not* constitute a review. After a few hours' reading you'll come away with two mental lists: one of films you need to track down; another of cleverly formed phrases. Essential.

Ian Berriman

Also worth checking out: 2007 follow-up *American Gothic*. A third in the series, *Euro Gothic*, is due for release in 2016.



Half A War

Better half

★★★★★

Release Date: 16 July

512 pages | Hardback/ebook
Author: Joe Abercrombie
Publisher: Harper Voyager

THE FINAL INSTALMENT

in *The Shattered Sea* series is the perfect ending to an outstanding YA trilogy. Mother War has spread her wings over the Shattered Sea and Father Yarvi is determined to uphold his oath of vengeance against Grandmother Wexen and the High King.

Once again there are new point-of-view characters, which may cause a little disappointment for some, but you'll grow to love Raith, Koll and Skara as much as you loved Yarvi, Brand and Thorn, whom you'll still see plenty of in the background. Joe Abercrombie has long been the master of grim and gritty fantasy, but *Half A War* proves that he's got all the skills of a master romance writer. The battles are bloody, the twists are shocking and the deaths are heartbreaking.

Bridie Roman

Joe Abercrombie will be returning to the world of *The First Law* with a collection of short stories, due in 2016.



Trollhunters

Rock 'n' Troll High School

★★★★★

Release Date: 7 July

322 pages | Hardback/ebook
Authors: Guillermo del Toro, Daniel Kraus
Publisher: Hot Key Books

THIS YA NOVEL SHARES

common ground with its co-author's film *Pan's Labyrinth* – a young person stumbles upon an underworld filled with grotesque creatures from myth – but could hardly be more different in tone. It's filtered through American high-school comedy and *Monty Python* – one central character is a troll historian with a British accent who this reviewer immediately imagined voiced by Eric Idle.

The plot's a little slow to get going, taking its time over introducing us to shortarse teenage loser Jim Sturges and his world: then, when Jim discovers it's his destiny to be a trollhunter, he slots into the role rather too quickly and conveniently. There are some good gags and neat twists, but this is standard zero-to-hero fare. **Eddie Robson**

Movies in development del Toro is attached to include adaptations of *Frankenstein* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*.



Way Down Dark

Spaceship turns pressure cooker

★★★★★

Release Date: 2 July

288 pages | Paperback/ebook
Author: JP Smythe
Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton

THERE'S NOT A LOT OF

humour in *Way Down Dark*. The only thing that even remotely counts as a gag only operates on a meta level – it's not characters telling each other knock knock jokes, just the reader realising, "Oh, that's why..."

A post-apocalyptic YA novel, it's set on a generational spaceship sent from a dying Earth which has degenerated into a violent pressure cooker of warring factions.

Extremely violent, hard-boiled stuff, it's exciting and gripping too. And though grim, it's not unrelenting or emotionally manipulative. It's a tale of the human spirit and why it's important to carry on fighting.

It also sails through the Bechdel test, with a cast of compelling, multilayered female characters making the men look utterly pointless. **Dave Golder**

James Smythe is writing a series for *The Guardian* called "Rereading Stephen King". He's up to *Rose Madger*.

FOOL'S ASSASSIN

★★★★★

Release Date: 16 July

Author: Robin Hobb
Publisher: Harper Voyager



Assassin FitzChivalry Farseer returned after nearly two decades in the first book of new series *The Fitz And The Fool*. As it opens, our hero is living a quiet life, but it's not long before his violent past sends him back on the path of epic adventure. We said: "A slow-paced character study that takes us deep into the life of its hero. When the epic story does explode into life, it is all the more shocking for it."

ONLY EVER YOURS

★★★★★

Release Date: 2 July

Author: Louise O'Neill
Publisher: Quercus



Sixteen-year-old Freida has a testing time of it in this Young Adult book, which is set in a future where genetic engineering has helped ensure that only male babies are born; females are designed in laboratories and schooled to be the perfect willing, subservient complement to men. We said: "Compelling writing and a brutal conclusion mean this only-too-real dystopia grips from beginning to end."

PRINCE LESTAT

★★★★★

Release Date: 2 July

Author: Anne Rice
Publisher: Arrow



Anne Rice's most popular vamp comes out of retirement for the eleventh *Vampire Chronicles* novel, in which disembodied presence "the Voice" commands old vampires to burn their younger brethren. We said: "As Rice switches between viewpoints, she also appears to be rebooting the franchise. This involves many scenes of vampires talking to each other, which becomes tiresome."

STAR WARS: TARKIN

★★★★★

Release Date: 2 July

Author: James Luceno
Publisher: Arrow



Peter Cushing's villainous Grand Moff Tarkin is the focus of this book. It features Darth Vader's earliest mission, as the two team up to investigate a terrorist attack on the Death Star. We said: "With key new information on three major villains, breakneck plotting, and several moments iconic enough to deserve their own cinematic spin-off, *Tarkin*'s charm will make you want to take a walk on the dark side."

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FIRST READ
AN EXTRACT FROM A NEW BOOK

The Empress Game

by Rhonda Mason

The first in a brand new gladiatorial space opera series from an exciting new voice in SF, with a badass female lead.



THE AUTHOR

Rhonda Mason divides her time between writing, editing, bulldogs and beaching. Her writing spans the gamut of speculative fiction, from space opera to epic fantasy to urban paranormal and back again. The only thing limiting her energy for fantastical worlds is the space-time continuum. When not creating worlds she edits for a living, and follows her marine biologist husband to the nearest beach. Her rescue bulldog, Grace, is her baby and faithful companion. Rhonda is a graduate of the Writing Popular Fiction masters program at Seton Hill University. www.RhondaMason.com.

Here we meet our kick-ass heroine, Kayla Reunimon, AKA Shadow Panthe, and catch a glimpse of the mysterious stranger who is to make her a life-changing offer.

Shadow Panthe. Power, grace, deadliness defined. Always cunning, never merciful, and endlessly, infinitely, victorious.

She, Kayla Reinumon, was Shadow Panthe. And she was tired of it.

Tired of fighting, of hiding.

Perhaps her foe would end it. Kayla gripped a kris dagger in each hand and eyed the fellow occupant of the Blood Pit. This one would not kill her. Could not, had she a wish to, which she most likely did. Every woman who earned the dubious glamour of fighting in the Blood Pit wished to vanquish Shadow Panthe and claim her throne. Well, this one would not.

The girl – who possessed the ridiculous stage name Angelic Assassin – came at Kayla with knives flashing. She had technique, at least. Flawless footwork brought Angelic close, her blade descending at the perfect angle to slice a hamstring. It might have succeeded if Kayla hadn't spent her twenty-five Ordochian years training for moments such as this.

She lashed out with her booted foot and sent one of the girl's knives spinning, arcing toward the crowd that sat above the Blood Pit. It struck one of the spectators, judging by the scream that rang out and was followed by a chorus of cheers. Kayla smiled. Hopefully the man had been killed, or at least seriously maimed.

She hated them, the men who came to this planet on the edge of Imperial Space to watch her fight. They fed off the violence, swore, sweated and screamed her name all night. She hated

them, but not more than she hated herself for being Shadow Panthe. For giving them exactly what they wanted.

Angelic rolled and recovered quickly. Impressive. Kayla glanced at the wavy edge of her own kris daggers before tossing the left one away. It skittered to the limit of the pit, out of reach.

"You'll wish you had that back," Angelic called. A round of boos met her declaration – the crowd didn't believe it any more than Kayla did.

"We'll see." Kayla twirled her remaining kris. "Come."

Angelic lunged again, grabbing at Kayla's knife hand even as she stabbed at her with her long, thin blade. Clever girl. Not a worthy opponent for Shadow Panthe, but clever nonetheless.

The fight ranged across the pit floor, as Lumar liked it to. Despite her disgust for the owner of the Blood Pit, she knew who paid her prize money and how he liked things done. Lumar wanted a show. If Kayla and her brother, Corinth, didn't depend on the credits the Blood Pit fights brought in she would have ended the fight in a heartbeat, spat at the spectators and told Lumar exactly where to shove his "show."

But they did need the credits, so Kayla ignored the self-loathing and toyed with the blonde girl. If inflicting half-a-dozen minor cuts and bruises could be considered toying. Kayla herself had almost as many injuries. The fight had to look good, after all. The crowd wanted their sport.

Kayla closed with the girl again. Her sleek, cat-like movements and micro-fine reflexes had earned Kayla the moniker Shadow Panthe long before her nights in the Blood Pit. It had taken fighting like a caged animal in front of a crowd to make her hate the title and all the skill it implied. They chanted it now, the syllables elongated, the sound drawn out. SHA-DOE-PANTH. SHA-DOE-PANTH.

The crowd's mood turned. They'd seen enough sport, now they wanted blood – Angelic's blood, never Shadow Panthe's. Not their infamous champion wench.

Screw 'em.

She'd given them enough already, and she still had a final

match tonight.

Kayla sidestepped, affecting a miscalculation that appeared to put her off balance. Angelic lunged to take advantage, as many fighters would have. Of course, a better fighter would have been more cautious. The best, like Kayla's mentor, would simply have laughed at such an obvious move. Not Angelic. She dove right in.

Kayla shifted her weight, spun past the charging girl and brought the hilt of her kris down hard on Angelic's temple. The girl crumpled without a sound to the stained organoplastic floor of the pit.

The crowd roared above them, and bile stung the back of Kayla's throat. She glared at them, her adoring fans. She knew they sensed her enmity and cherished her all the more for it. What better champion had they ever seen? Who more flawless, more coldhearted than she?

None.

Nights like this made her almost thankful for her mentor's murder. If she were ever to have seen Kayla thus, fighting for money, for the pleasure of men in a pit of filth on the slum side of Altair Tri...

An oddity in the crowd caught her eye. Had he moved, she would never have noticed him. That he didn't stand wasn't in and of itself strange. Many men couldn't be bothered to rise for her, though they applauded and shouted as loud as any.

This man, though, didn't clap. He didn't wave his arms about, say something to his neighbor or point at the unconscious body of her latest victim. He held himself as rigid as the trinium decking and stared at her. She wanted to hate him, group him with the others. He sat in the arena, had paid to watch her fight another woman, hadn't he? One look at him and her mind refused. Different.

In his eyes she saw none of the admiration, none of the lust or possessiveness that shone in the others'. What she saw instead disturbed her: calculation. As if he saw past the façade, past the paint that covered her, the stage-name that shielded her.

She touched her fingers to the black ashk that wound around the lower half of her face, afraid she'd been unmasked. The cloth was still in place, revealing only her eyes.

The whoosh of pressure locks releasing tore through the crowd noise, offering her an escape. A battered section of the pit wall opened toward her, all the invitation she needed. She scooped up the dagger she'd tossed aside and fled the pit.

"What the frutt do you think you're doing, Shadow? They didn't come to see you play footsies, they came to see you fight."

Kayla didn't bother to look at Lumar as he ranted behind her.

"I told you to punish that upstart, but no, you let her off easy. I swear..."

Even if this same scene didn't play out after most of her fights, she still wouldn't have listened just then. She waited on the airway, a catwalk of trinium alloy that ringed the top of the arena and led to the fighters' dressing rooms. Lumar's uneven tread rattled the plating behind her while she peered down at the pit. Against her will, her gaze sought out the single man.

He sat as still as ever. Was he enamored with the spectacle in the pit? She glanced at the current contest – Oriala versus some unknown. All of Lumar's fighters wore skimpy costumes, and Oriala's chest threatened to burst out of her top with every breath. Kayla snorted. The look in the man's eyes must have been fanciful imagining on her part. He was just like all the rest.

Before she could decide if the revelation relieved or disappointed her, she noticed that the angle of his stare was off. His gaze was a touch high. He looked as though... he studied the ring of lights circling the pit. His posture indicated attentiveness, but she doubted he saw anything of what was going on in there.

Odd.

What sort of man came to the Blood Pit and didn't watch the fights? Mercenaries, smugglers, slave runners and unsavories of all sorts came to the pit to do business, but they always confined it to the intermission between matches. No one ignored the violence on display.

Except this man.

A chill crept over her, raising the fine hairs on the back of her neck. Why, then, had he been staring at her after the match? What was he doing here?

"Are you listening to me? I have had it!" Lumar grabbed her upper arm, heedless of the damage to her body paint. "Do you want to lose tonight?"

She tore her gaze away from the mysterious man in the crowd and focused her coldest stare on the pit's owner. "Shadow Panthe never loses." Kayla bared her teeth in a feral smile. "That's why they love me."

"You'll lose when I tell you to. I control every match here."

She arched a brow.

To find out what happens next, pick up *The Empress Game*, out now from Titan Books (RRP £7.99). E-book also available. www.titanbooks.com

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OVERVIEW

Chrononauts

Time is on their side



Release Date: **OUT NOW!**

Publisher: Image Comics

Writer: Mark Millar

Artist: Sean Gordon Murphy



HE'S A GREAT

ideas man, an amazing self-promoter, and possibly the most high-profile comics creator since Stan Lee, yet Mark Millar isn't always the ideal ambassador for mainstream comics. When a Millar series works, it's flashy, bracing entertainment – but when it doesn't, the results can vary from boringly offensive (*Nemesis*) to dreadfully bland (*Supercrooks*).

His new series *Chrononauts* (already optioned for a movie) doesn't quite plumb those depths, but still forgets to bring along anything resembling subtlety or charm. It's a sci-fi adventure that employs the shallow wish-fulfillment shtick that Millar has frequently exploited in comics like *Wanted*, *Superior* and *Kick-Ass*, only this time applying the formula to time-travel.

The story's opening four-issue volume follows rock-star scientists Corbin Quinn and Danny Reilly as they embark on the first manned time-travel mission, using advanced suits that give them the ability to go anywhere in history.

When an accident severs Quinn's communications with home base, he decides to use time to his advantage, plundering different historical eras and setting himself up to live like a king. Naturally, this behaviour soon has major consequences, and in theory *Chrononauts* should be a fun adventure romp of the kind Millar has been able to pull off before.

The series certainly doesn't lack strong visuals, as artist Sean Gordon Murphy and colourist Matt Hollingsworth pack every page with lush detail. Their work gives even

Forgets to bring along anything like subtlety or charm



the weaker sections of the story a sense of character, impact and polish, ensuring that *Chrononauts* is always a kinetic, visually inviting comic.

It's just a pity their efforts aren't matched by the script, as Millar's snarky approach to dialogue and characterisation can often feel one-note. While he pulled off a surprising level of heart in 2014's *Starlight*, here he's back in slick, empty-headed territory with a pair of swaggering, unlikeable protagonists, stereotypes galore and a mechanical story that doesn't offer a single genuine surprise.

From Corbin Quinn's predictable daddy issues to the two-dimensional female characters, this is a comic that feels like it's going through the motions rather than offering anything new. There are occasional flickers of interest in sequences like a chase that stretches across time (from JFK's assassination to a Roman chariot race), but the cartoony *Bill And Ted*-style approach to time travel ultimately can't make up for the shallow storytelling.

The final issue of the current miniseries wasn't available for review, but so far this feels like Millar leaning too heavily on his artistic collaborators and failing to stretch himself as a writer. The inevitable film adaptation will hopefully sand off the story's more obnoxious edges, but right now *Chrononauts* feels more like a sketchy movie pitch than a satisfying story in its own right. **Saxon Bullock**

❓ Millar reckons the past might get dull. "I'd only dip into the 15th century for a day. After that I'd need to check Twitter!"



GRAPHIC NOVEL

Judge Dredd: Dark Justice

Death warmed up



Release Date: **14 July**

Publisher: Rebellion

Writer: John Wagner

Artist: Greg Staples



SOMETIMES,

even villains need a break. Trans-dimensional superfiend Judge Death and his

brother "Dark Judges" have always been among the most striking and distinctive adversaries for Judge Dredd, but overuse and a blackly comic approach blunted their edges over the years; wisely, they've been rested for a decade. *Dredd* co-creator John Wagner only agreed to bring Death and co back to 2000 AD if he had a strong enough story, a target he hits with this tense, claustrophobic thriller.

Following on from the Dark Judges' brief appearance in the epic *Day Of Chaos* saga, *Dark Justice* sees Judge Death returning to Mega-City One and recovering the suspended spirits of his comrades Fear, Fire and Mortis. However, this time Death has a very different plan in mind, as the Dark Judges stow away on the Mayflower, a luxurious galactic colony ship headed for deep space.

Wagner has crafted a tightly structured horror thriller in the vein of *Alien*. The tone recaptures the bleak edge of Death's first appearances, while Greg Staples's fully-painted artwork features astonishing levels of atmosphere, mixing spectacular SF world-building with moments of genuine horror. From the jaw-dropping visuals to the grisly plot twists, *Dark Justice* is both a rip-roaring adventure and a serious return to form for these classic villains.

Saxon Bullock

❓ It took Staples two years to produce the story's 66 pages, all of which were traditionally painted, and not digital.



OVERVIEW

Descender

Little lost droid



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: Image Comics

Writer: Jeff Lemire

Artist: Dustin Nguyen



ROBOT STORIES

remain so popular and long-lasting simply because there's so much you can say with them.

The latest tale to tread in the footsteps of Asimov and many others is *Descender*, a new ongoing series from Image that's also yet another example of the continuing renaissance of sci-fi comics.

The story is set in the far future, 10 years after mysterious giant robots called Harvesters wreaked havoc across galactic civilisation. A massive anti-robot cull followed, but now one of the last remaining robots has awoken on a distant mining

colony. Tim-21 is a lifelike robot boy who faces a struggle to survive in a hostile universe – but somehow, he also carries inside himself the secret to understanding the Harvesters...

Written by *Sweet Tooth*'s Jeff Lemire, *Descender* is already off to an impressive start in its first three issues, setting up a convincing SF world while also tapping into powerful emotional themes. The story has some clear influences (especially Spielberg's 2001 movie

AI), but there are plenty of fresh and original touches here, while Dustin Nguyen's art gives the story a unique look. Executed in lush watercolour tones, *Descender*'s artwork is evocative and characterful, making this an emotive SF epic that so far looks strong enough to give fellow Image SF comic *Saga* a run for its money. **Saxon Bullock**

Lemire's next project will be as an artist: he's drawing upcoming Image series *AD: After Death* for *Batman* writer Scott Snyder.



OVERVIEW

Project Superpowers: Blackcross

Golden Rage



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: Dynamite Entertainment

Writer: Warren Ellis

Artist: Colton Worley



AFTER HIS

impressive reinvention of *Moon Knight* last year, Warren Ellis has turned his attention to some even more obscure

heroes. Branching out from Dynamite's *Project Superpowers* series, *Blackcross* brings together a disparate group of Golden Age characters that were originally published by defunct companies such as Nedor and Fox Comics, but whose rights are now mostly in the public domain.

With the main protagonists initially unaware of their true identities, a passing knowledge

of who they actually are will help to clarify the finer nuances of what unfolds. Evoking the quirky, claustrophobic spirit of *Wayward Pines* or a less snow-bound *Fargo*, the story takes place in the town of Blackcross, which is rocked by the arrival of a supernatural serial killer. Opening things with a scene of a naked man setting himself on fire

before walking into a lake and disappearing, Ellis ratchets up the tension from the first few pages and never lets up. Casting Lady Satan as a fake psychic medium is a masterstroke, while Robbie Benton, aka the Black Terror, is reborn as a pharmacist with a dark past.

With Ellis's script meshing perfectly with Colton Worley's moody art and Morgan Hickman's sombre colours, *Blackcross* makes a refreshing alternative to this summer's more bombastic event books. But at only six issues long, the downside is that, like *Moon Knight*, it will be over far too soon. **Stephen Jewell**

Some of Nedor's early *Black Terror* stories in the 1940s were written by Patricia Highsmith, before she became a novelist.



There's a familiar face...

OVERVIEW

Orphan Black

The Clone Stranger



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Publisher: IDW Publishing

Writers: Graeme Manson, John Fawcett, Jody Houser

Artists: Szymon Kudranski, Mat Lopes



SPIN-OFF

comics are hard enough at the best of times, but tackling a property as complex as *Orphan Black* is

asking for trouble. The TV show sports a ferociously involved mythos and multiple clones (all played by Tatiana Maslany), but this eight-issue miniseries takes an interesting approach, focusing on one clone per issue, and giving us an alternate view on many of the show's events.

Once again, we follow a con artist named Sarah as she encounters duplicates of herself and discovers she's part of a human cloning experiment. These duplicates vary from the insane Helena (the focus of issue two) to nifty housewife Alison (who stars in issue three), and each is heavily involved in the overall conspiracy.

Written from outlines by show creators Graeme Manson and John Fawcett, the series attempts to be accessible for new readers but works best as a companion piece, giving more insight into the characters. So far (three issues in) the results are a little on the uneven side, with too many scenes recycled directly from the show.

However, the narrative approach does pull off some highlights, and adds depth to the overall saga. It'll be up to the remaining five issues to conclusively prove whether the *Orphan Black* comic is a worthy experiment or a noble failure...

Saxon Bullock

Orphan Black co-creator Graeme Manson also co-wrote the screenplay for the 1997 SF cult favourite *Cube*.



She began to suspect there was more to these “glow-in-the-dark” gloves than she’d been led to believe.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

Wonderful wilderness



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Reviewed on: Xbox One
Also available on: PS4, PC
Publisher: CD Projekt Red



THERE IS AN awful lot to do in *The Witcher 3*, although the vast majority of it follows the same

template: research, prepare, find and kill. You speak to the locals for leads, you use hero Geralt’s Witcher senses to find clues, you prepare the potions and oils to buff Geralt and his weapons for the task ahead, and then, finally, you fight. Combat here rewards a considered approach. You can rush in and hope for the best, but healing is a matter of

consuming potions and food to slowly refill your health bar; get into trouble and it’s far from easy to get out of it. It’s a smart, considered system that’s a lot more involved than we’ve come to expect from this genre.

Geralt himself takes some getting used to. He can be cold, certainly, and his voice actor’s no Brando, but he’s dryly funny when he wants to be, a steely-gazed killer when he needs to be and a far more emotionally

complex figure than the badass on the box art might suggest – a fine achievement in a genre that typically presents the player with a blank canvas. There’s still plenty of scope for personal development: choices are frequent and their consequences

frequently brutal. There is no good or evil here – just dreadful and even worse – and many seemingly innocuous decisions can have immediate, quite disastrous outcomes.

As well as *The Witcher 3*’s component parts work, an open-world game is only as good as its world – and the Northern Kingdoms are among the very best. Despite the vast expanse, developer CDP has restrained itself from a Ubisoft-style insistence on filling the world with

There’s plenty of room to breathe, to stop and marvel

stuff; there is a tremendous amount to do, but it is smartly spread out. There’s plenty of room for you to breathe, to stop and marvel. No flashing icons or text pop-ups desperately trying to keep you busy; just you, your horse, your sword and a map. What happens next is up to you.

It’s by no means a flawless victory, but *The Witcher 3* is a remarkable, if uneven, adventure that we’ll be dipping into for months to come.

Nathan Brown

Charles Dance makes his first videogame voice appearance here, as Emperor Emhyr Var Emreis.



Locals were friendly in the north.

Game Of Thrones: Episode 4 – Sons Of Winter

Reddy or not



Release Date: OUT NOW!

Reviewed on: Xbox One
Also available on: PS4, PS3, Xbox, PC, mobile
Publisher: Telltale Games



SO, WE’VE NOW survived past the halfway point of Telltale’s *Game Of Thrones* series – in George RR Martin

terms, this makes us practically veterans. Story-wise, things are finally starting to happen. We’re tasked with helping to liberate Meereen, resulting in a bit of simple sneaking (“press A to move to next piece of cover”) and some enjoyable combat setpieces. There are dark revelations, as well as decisions to keep or spill secrets, take or spare lives, and pick up or leave a bag full of onions.

But while the choices in the previous episode felt like they *might* not have that much of an impact on the story at large, here this is at times made patently obvious. At one point, for instance, we got a bit gung-ho with our approach to diplomatic negotiation and ended up getting what can only be described as “Red Wedding-ed”. The result? A fade to the “valar morghulis” screen, snapping us out of any illusion that we were determining our own fate. Why include options that are judged by the game as objectively wrong?

Frustrating, too, are the aesthetic missteps. Some accents are all over the place (we’d no idea Australia was one of the Seven Kingdoms) and loads can be lengthy. Much of the scenery looks as if it’s been smeared with Vaseline, and some characters boast disturbingly jaggy edges. Here’s hoping the continuing story is enough to overshadow these issues next time. **Emma Davies**

Ty Corey Franck, George RR Martin’s personal assistant, acts as story consultant on Telltale’s *GOT* games.



AUDIO ADVENTURES

Doctor Who

Time-warped TARDIS teams triumphant?

Last Of The Cybermen

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

120 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

The Secret History

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

120 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

Suburban Hell

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

50 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

The Cloisters of Terror

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

55 minutes | CD/download
Publisher: Big Finish

CELEBRATING THE 200TH release of their regular monthly *Who* series, Big Finish's latest trilogy concludes with two tales that both feature unusual TARDIS teams. The Doctor's past is being disrupted, and

in *Last Of The Cybermen*, the Sixth Doctor (Colin Baker) is paired with Troughton-era companions Jamie (Frazer Hines) and Zoe (Wendy Padbury). They end up on a bleak planetoid, where a strange outpost is somehow connected to the end of the Cyber Wars, and the resulting adventure does its best to contrast the different styles of the Second and Sixth Doctors. The script maintains a fun, imaginative tone and remains consistently enjoyable, although the convoluted final episode does overplay the time-travel shenanigans.

Stronger and more focused, *The Secret History* brings the trilogy to an effective close, as a temporal glitch unites the Fifth Doctor (Peter Davison) with Hartnell-era companions Steven (Peter Purves) and Vicki (Maureen O'Brien). The TARDIS lands them in the latter days of the Roman Empire, and what starts as a ripping historical saga turns stranger as it becomes clear someone is deliberately manipulating the Doctor's life. The ultimate reveal of the mystery is effective, while the story maintains a creative blend of historical detail and sci-fi intrigue. Strong acting and a witty script make this a satisfying conclusion, as well as a great showcase for the joyful oddities of classic *Who* storytelling.

Elsewhere, the latest season of Fourth Doctor audios continues with a pair of adventures that show off the different flavours of the Tom Baker era. In *Suburban Hell*, the tone is deliberately comic, as the Doctor and Leela gatecrash a seemingly ordinary '70s suburban dinner party, then encounter temporal anomalies alongside a terrifying alien force. A deliberate homage to classic '70s comedy-drama *Abigail's Party*, it's an entertaining and lurid tale that veers from hilarious melodrama to pulpy SF thrills, and which gives Baker plenty of chances to shine.

In contrast, *The Cloisters Of Terror* goes firmly into gothic horror mode, as the Doctor and Leela investigate strange activities at an Oxford college where a trio of ghostly nuns are wreaking havoc. There are entertainingly spooky setpieces and sharply crafted dialogue, although the mix of supernatural horror and sci-fi ultimately goes in a fairly predictable direction. Nevertheless, it's still a lively retro SF chiller that's once again anchored by excellent performances from both Tom Baker and Louise Jameson.

Saxon Bullock

Also out: a First Doctor *Companion Chronicles* box set, and (16 July) a reading of the novelisation of "The Ark In Space".



BOARDGAME

XenoShyft: Onslaught

Alien assault! All hands on deck

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!

Players: One to four

Price: £39.99

Publisher: Cool Mini Or Not

LIKE A VIDEOGAME

"Horde" mode, this multiplayer deck-builder pits up to four divisions of the NorTec Military against rampaging aliens. Survive nine attacks split across three, increasingly brutal waves, and the group wins; if the base's hit points are reduced to zero, the aliens win the day.

Although convoluted in set-up, the game is relatively simple. At the start of each round, you reinforce your squad with new troops and buy new equipment – both of which are in short supply – and then use the men and material at your disposal to defend against the onslaught. Attackers are dealt face down and engaged one at a time, to add an air of surprise.

Both species have skills and perks that can be applied during combat. But even though it's just a case of matching damage vs health, you often have a situation where both characters have taken damage, and are being partially protected and/or buffed by another character or piece of equipment, so it can be tricky to keep track of who's done what to whom.

Despite its flaws, *XenoShyft: Onslaught* is engaging and fun. As the battle to save the last vestiges of your base grows ever fiercer, the co-op element – in which you can offer to lob a grenade or pass on a medpack – really comes into play, and makes for a pleasantly different gaming experience.

Steve Jarratt

The publishers are looking for people to playtest a new game, *XenoShyft: Dreadmire*. See <http://bit.ly/xenotest>.

Box Of Delights

What we've been playing with this month

FUNKO PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

2 Fabrikations Rocket Raccoon

Funko | Height: 18cm | RRP: £19.99 | FPI price: £16.99 | Catalogue number: C1727

Cute? Waddaya mean, cute? Don't give me no cute! I ain't frickin' cute! Deadly, super-freakin'-smart and melt-the-laydeez handsome, mebbe, but cute? Don't make me puke. Whoa... don't tickle me under the frickin' chin, ya bozo! And get ya paws outta my fur! And don't tug my tail, dumbass! I don't care how soft it is! That bit's private, dig? Gimme some goddamn respect here. Waddaya mean you want me to meet your cat? You some kinda frickin' sadist?

3 Doctor Who Stacking Mugs

Half Moon Bay | Height: 10cm (each individual mug) | RRP: £16.99 | FPI price: £14.99 | Catalogue number: C6411

These stackable kitchenware sets often just gather dust on a shelf, either because the cups are so small or cos the way the art's divided up means you have a 25% chance of drinking out of, say, Han Solo's groin. Not this set of *Who* mugs: all four are a decent size, and the individual designs all work in isolation (though the squashed, stylised Dalek does look a tad odd). Pick of the bunch: the Fourth Doctor's costume one, complete with his "Would you like a jelly baby?" catchphrase on the reverse.

4 Buffy ReAction Figures

Funko | Height: 10cm | RRP: £9.99 each | FPI price: £8.99 each | Catalogue numbers: B6998, B7001, B7002

If it didn't say *Buffy* on the box, you'd never guess who these figures are meant to be. Even the Gentlemen (billed as plural, even though there's only one of him) looks more like something from *The Nightmare Before Christmas* than anybody who's ever terrorised Sunnydale. Buffy and Willow, meanwhile, look like they've wandered in from some low-rent *Hollyoaks* range of figures. Spike, Angel and Oz are also available - Oz comes with a guitar, presumably to make sure you know it's him.

1 Godzilla 12" Action Figure

NECA | Length: 30cm | RRP: £19.99 | FPI price: £14.99 | Catalogue number: C1852

Don't mess. He's a whole one foot in length. That's more than big enough to terrorise a standard action figure, so watch out Buffy and Willow. While this Godzilla (based on Big G's look in 1985 revival *The Return Of Godzilla*) has an impressive level of detail, the level of articulation is even better: his head swivels, his tail bends, and his mouth opens and closes. Stopmotion animation ahoy! We're just sad he's unable to vomit nuclear fire, otherwise he'd be perfect.



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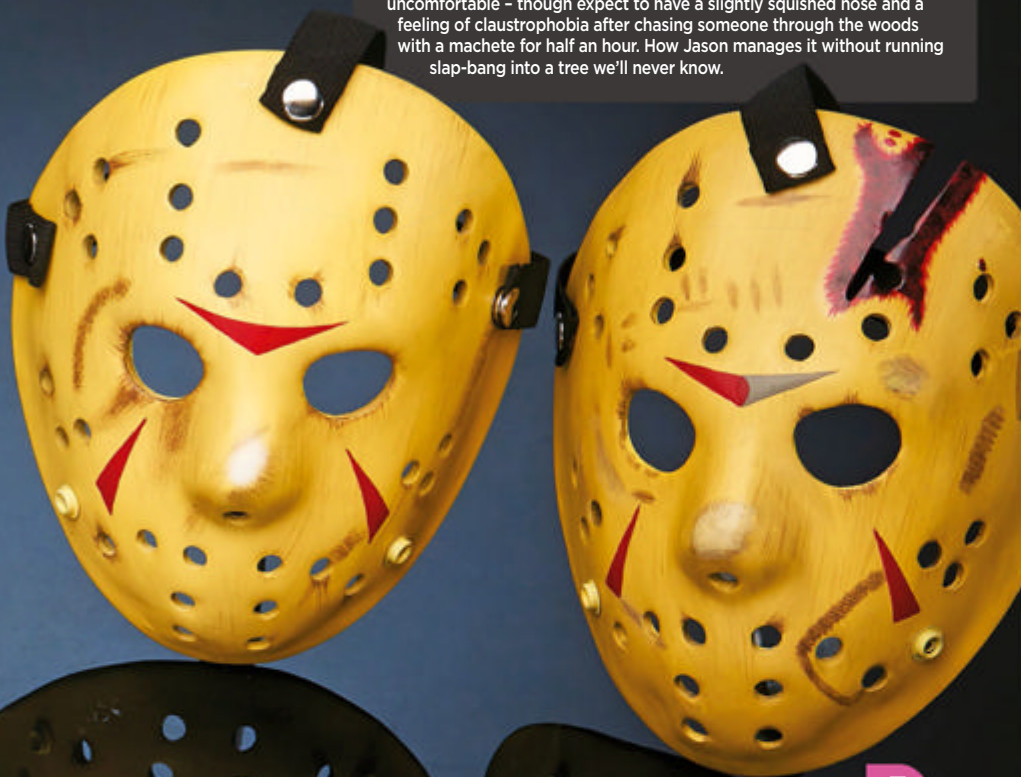
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7 Friday The 13th Masks

NECA | Width: 20cm | RRP: £36.99 each | FPL price: £26.99 each | Catalogue numbers: B8613, B8615A

Classier than the usual plastic Halloween costume gear, these replicas of Jason Voorhees' iconic facewear are based on parts *III* (in which the hockey mask debuted) and *IV* (by which time it'd suffered some axe damage). Elasticated straps hold 'em in place, and they're not too uncomfortable – though expect to have a slightly squished nose and a feeling of claustrophobia after chasing someone through the woods with a machete for half an hour. How Jason manages it without running slap-bang into a tree we'll never know.



7

6 Freddy Krueger Glove

NECA | Length: 35cm | RRP: £69.99 | FPL price: £59.99 | Catalogue number: B7436

Nightmare On Elm Street aficionados will know that Freddy's iconic weapon was slightly different in every film. This authentically grotty-looking replica is based on third entry *Dream Warriors*, which means the finger blades are larger than in the original movie (16cm long) – all the better to creepily gesticulate with! A minor gripe: the loops attaching the blades are placed a bit high on a couple of fingers; your leftmost digit can easily slip out. But buying this is a damn sight easier than knocking one up yourself with sheet metal and fishing knives...

6

TOYS & COLLECTABLES

THINGS TO COME

MORE GOODIES COMING YOUR WAY



GHOSTBUSTERS ACTION FIGURES

EXPECT TO PAY
£20

ETA: OCTOBER

With the new *Ghostbusters* movie inspiring a wave of nostalgia, Diamond Select obviously reckon now's the perfect time for a range of 7" figures based on the 1984 original. A dozen are planned, with the opening wave made up of Ray, Winston and nerdy accountant Louis. Each figure will come with a piece of diorama; collect all 12 and you'll be able to piece together the climactic rooftop battle.

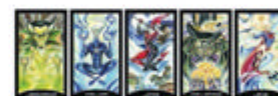


EXPECT TO PAY
£20

GOTHAM ACTION FIGURES

ETA: OCTOBER

Fox's *Batman* prequel is also action figuring, starting by shrinking future Commissioner James Gordon, proto-Catwoman Selina Kyle and young Penguin Oswald Cobblepot down to 7" scale. Each figure comes with a wee diorama you can plonk them into – in Gordon's case, it's an alleyway, while Kyle gets a fire escape and Cobblepot gets a bit of Gotham City pier.



EXPECT TO PAY
£20

JUSTICE LEAGUE TAROT CARDS

ETA: DECEMBER

These aren't the first licensed tarot cards we've seen – Bif Bang Pow! brought out a rather natty *Penny Dreadful* set not that long ago – but it's one of the most attractive. The illustrations (which cast, for example, Ra's al Ghul as the Hierophant and Harley Quinn as the Fool) are by Sara Richard. Painted in acrylics, they look appropriately airy and mystical.

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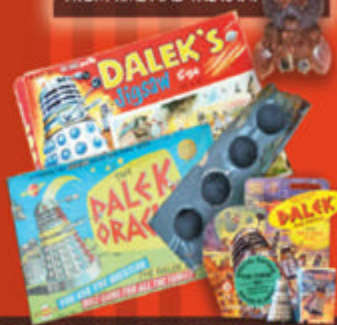


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What's On

What to watch when this month



- **Mondays** - *Dark Matter* continues on Syfy, while there's more computer-powered crime solving on Channel 5 in *Person Of Interest*.
- **Tuesdays** - *Falling Skies*' final season kicks off on Fox on 30 June.
- **Wednesdays** - *Dominion*, the spin-off from Paul Bettany movie *Legion*, returns to Syfy from 15 July.
- **Thursdays** - Spend an evening with a vast array of aliens in *Defiance* on Syfy, sampling some weirdness in *Wayward Pines* on Fox or, er, watching *Beauty And The Beast* on Watch from 9 July.
- **Sundays** - AI drama *Humans* is on Channel 4, while *Agent Carter* lands in the UK on Fox from 12 July.
- **Also on** - It's relatively quiet on the TV front now that the US network seasons are over, but what better chance to catch up on all the cool stuff available on Netflix and Amazon Prime. *Daredevil*, *Sense8*, *Outlander* and the rest should fill the summer months nicely.



BROADCAST UK: AIRED ON CHANNEL 5 US: AIRED ON FOX

Gotham

The Dark Knight Incubates

GOTHAM'S GOLDEN RULE - NO heroes," says Harvey Bullock in an early episode of *Gotham*. It could well be a mission statement for the show itself.

Villains, as actors, writers and critics love to point out, are far more interesting than heroes. Rarely has there been a more extreme example than *Gotham*. Fox's show about Bruce Wayne's "in-between years" - after the killing of his parents but before he becomes Batman - concentrates on a young Jim Gordon as he tries to fight crime in Gotham on two fronts: the villains and gangsters on the street, and the corruption within the police department. (You could make that three fronts, as he has to struggle with actor Ben McKenzie's limited range of expressions too.)

To be fair, Gordon improved massively throughout the season; a lively new girlfriend, Dr Leslie Thompkins (Morena Baccarin), helps humanise him after the deathly dull Barbara, while some dodgy moral decisions place some interesting dents in his goody-two-

shoes persona. Bruce, though, often comes across more like a fledgling Sherlock Holmes, destined to become a socially awkward savant detective rather than a playboy vigilante. Try as hard as the show does to make his plotlines interesting (usually by having Alfred swear amusingly), they're often a distraction from the main event: the villains.

Gotham is, to a large degree, a checklist show. A lot of the fun is seeing how it reinterprets Batman's extraordinary rogues' gallery, and it comes up trumps time and time again.

Robin Lord Taylor's Penguin is *Gotham*'s shining achievement. A slimy, manipulative, fork-tongued schemer with a Western Gothic wardrobe and slightly too much love for his mum, this Penguin is mesmerically grotesque. Often his scenes are the highlight of any given episode.

Then there's the not-quite-yet Riddler, Ed Nymga, here a nerdy, socially inept, toothily-grinning forensic scientist. For a long while we

BONUS FEATURES

● **Redefinition:** According to gangster boss Maroni, hubris means: "When limping little chicken-butt, second bananas think they're hot stuff."

● **Cox Up:** In episode seven Mikia Cox is credited as playing Dr Leslie Thompkins but never named on screen. Later in the season, *Firefly*'s Morena Baccarin takes on the role as a recurring character.

● **No-go:** Although a logo for Oliver Queen's company Queen Consolidated can be seen in a skyline shot in episode two, there are no plans for a *Crisis On Infinite Networks* crossover between Fox's *Gotham* and The CW's *Arrow*.

● **Architects Journey:** Inspiration for the Gotham Police Precinct set came from London's St Pancras station, cathedrals, old prisons and the film *Seven*.

● **Best Line:** Selina: "In Gotham people don't fight with gloves on."



A lift of *normal* people
is bad enough...

see only brief flickering shadows of his dark side before he goes totally off the rails. Much hacking and acid is involved. Yet, somehow, Cory Michael Smith still makes Ed weirdly adorable.

The show's been more playful with its introduction of the Joker, with at least two obvious candidates. However, if Cameron Monaghan's Jerome, the deranged, matricidal son of a circus snake charmer, *isn't* the Joker it'll be one of the biggest wastes in TV history. The scene where he turns from shy teenager into a laughing lunatic channelling Jack Nicholson was a hair-raising highlight of the entire season.

The young Catwoman is less successful. She's supposed to be a street kid, but has irritatingly bouncy straight-out-of-the-salon hair and an overly-designed leather-look. Where she should be streetwise and cool she's pouty and whiny. The complete opposite to Penguin, she's often the weak link in any episode. Whereas the teenage Poison Ivy – a down-and-out, vegan Wednesday from the Addams Family – is an absolute delight, though criminally underused.

A youthful Harvey Dent is also around, for the moment a mouthy, shifty lawyer with a double-sided coin and a propensity for standing half in shadow hinting at his Two-Faced future.

Many of the gangsters – including Maroni and Falcone – are from the comics too. Though less iconic, the show has a lot of fun fleshing them out along the lines of *The Godfather* meets *Sin City*.

So, who's left to reinvent for season two? Bane, Ra's Al Ghul, Mr Freeze and, especially, Harley Quinn would be top of our list. **Dave Golder**

MINDPROBE

Naveen Andrews

The former *Lost* castaway hits the road for the Wachowskis' world-spanning *Sense8*

What were your first impressions when you read the script?

The first thing that struck me about the script was its incredible epic scope and the fact there are moments of great intimacy, that I rarely find in any writing, on this vast, international canvas.

Was the globe-hopping a challenge as an actor?

The cast was like a band on the road. We would shoot a scene in Chicago and then the very same scene would be shot again two months later in Reykjavik, Iceland. We knew this when we did rehearsals. We thought, we have to learn everything because we don't know

when and where we might be called upon to do the same scene again in a completely different way. What the Wachowskis brought forth in the work was that each city has its own soul.

Jonas is an enigma for the audience. How did you approach his character?

For both me and Daryl [Hannah, who plays Angel], when we got to San Francisco for the read-through we had all these questions about our characters. Daryl actually wrote them down on a piece of paper which she gave to the Wachowskis and never got a reply! How I discovered this character was from watching the Wachowskis work on set, particularly Lana. That required a lot of trust on our part which we were more than happy to give. I mean, they're artists and you want to give everything to that because it's a rare experience to work with artists. I try to be involved in work which hopefully in some way is ground-breaking,

there is no other way to put it. I've never been in a scene where the camera pans from one character to another and as it pans you go to a different city. **David West**

All 12 episodes of *Sense8*'s first season are available on Netflix now.



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BROADCAST UK: AIRED ON SKY 1 US: AIRED ON THE CW

Not much of a secret disguise, but better than Superman's.

The Flash

The speedster gets Scripteased

OPENING MONOLOGUE OVER clips of Barry running randomly through Central City.
Cut to coffee shop. BARRY is at a table with STAR Labs scientists CISCO and CAITLIN, and adoptive dad, JOE, a cop. Enter IRIS, Joe's daughter. She's in a strop.
Iris: You lied to me. And you. Everybody's lying. It's not fair.
Joe: Who do you love, Iris? Barry or my cop partner Eddie?
Iris: Eddie of course.
Everybody else: Liar, liar, pants on fire... Exit IRIS. In a strop. Barry's phone rings.
Doctor Wells (over the phone): A meta-human is attacking Central City Aquarium. Exit BARRY in a flash

Cut to Aquarium. A man dressed as a janitor is wrecking the place. This is [INSERT REAL NAME OF MINOR DC CHARACTER]. He is sweating profusely. Enter BARRY, in a flash.
Barry: Hey man, buy some antiperspirant.
BARRY and [INSERT NAME] fight but [INSERT NAME] keeps turning into liquid, so Barry can't hit him.
[INSERT NAME]: I used to work here and everybody ignored me.
Barry: Stop being so wet.
[INSERT NAME]: You know Spider-Man does better quips, right?
[INSERT NAME] vanishes down a drain.

BONUS FEATURES

► **Reunion:** The Flash reunites *Prison Break*'s Wentworth Miller and Dominic Purcell as partners-in-crime Captain Cold and Heat Wave.
► **Cover-up:** In one episode Barry has a very oddly-shaped bruise on his ribs. That was to cover up Grant Gustin's tattoo of his home state of Virginia.

► **In-Jokes:** Look out for repeated use of the number 52 - it's a reference to DC's current New 52 line of comic books.
► **Relative Values:** *The Flash* features Robbie Amell, cousin of *Arrow* actor Stephen Amell, as one half of Firestorm.
► **Best Line:** Wells: "You have shown me what it's like to have a son. But to me, you've been dead for centuries."

Cut to STAR Labs.
Wells: You need to be faster, Barry. More speed!
Barry: [INSERT NAME] kept turning into yellow water.
Cisco: Let's call him Golden Shower!
Caitlin: Um... no let's not, Cisco.
Cisco: But I always name the villains.
Caitlin: Just Google it...
Barry: I need you to invent me something.
Cisco: The Hyper Hose! But you'll have to run really fast to make it work.
Barry: Of course.
Cut to aquarium. [INSERT NAME] is back. Enter Barry with the Hyper Hose.
Barry: There's a goldfish bowl with your name on it.
Barry runs really fast around [INSERT NAME] wrapping him in the Hyper Hose. Enter Reverse-Flash looking blurry and yellow and not a bit like Dr Wells.
Barry: It's you! You killed my mum!
Reverse-Flash: I'm not Wells. Honest.
Enter IRIS. In a strop.
Iris: Liar!
 Cue NEXT WEEK montage. **Dave Golder**

YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING... TATAU

What SFX's Facebook users think of BBC Three's South Seas drama

► I struggled to get through the first episode. I found the main characters to be really unlikeable.
Geordie Jeans
► I saw one episode and just thought it had B-movie values written all over it and no direction at all. Was it a comedy? A drama? A horror? It doesn't seem to know.
Andy Hall
► I didn't go past the first episode

as it was pretty poor. Why they cancelled *In The Flesh* and put this on is crazy.
Joseph Bedington
► Halfway through the first episode I turned it off. Had high hopes because I read they cancelled *In The Flesh* for this. It's really, really bad. Really really bad.
Rachel Louise Bridgeman
► Watched the first two episodes,

but then stopped as the seen-it-before storyline and the character of Budgie made me want to assault the nearest brick wall with my forehead. Well, you did ask...
David Stephens
► It's so awful that I actually watched an episode of *The Vampire Diaries* after it... and thought that was good!
Catherine Nugent

► Couldn't get into it. Thought the actors playing the main characters had stepped out of an episode of *EastEnders*.
William Potts
► Looks like the writers played *Far Cry 3* a bit much.
Ian Chandler
► It's a bit shit, isn't it?
Eduard Korhonen
► The only half-way interesting

thing about the whole show was the New Zealand locations.
Jon David
► I liked the fact that it was rooted in Polynesian culture. It's a part of the world with some really rich folklore - I'd love to see more TV shows and movies explore areas of world mythology that rarely get a look-in.
Kenny Childs





BROADCAST UK: AIRED ON CHANNEL 4 US: AIRED ON ABC

He didn't see *that* coming.

Agents Of SHIELD

Not quite the leader of the pack

AGENTS OF SHIELD HAS stormed through a second season so packed, inventive and dynamic that it's almost as though it's received a *Changing Rooms*-style makeover since those wobbly early days.

After being given a kick up the arse in its first year with the release of *The Winter Soldier*, the show was on sure enough ground this season that it didn't require a boost from *Age Of Ultron* – indeed, the release of the movie barely impacted on the plot. *SHIELD*

is doing mighty fine all by itself, and long may it continue.

However, the show that started out as the little brother of Marvel's big-screen adventures is now suffering from the addition of *Agent Carter* and *Daredevil* to its small-screen universe: you could argue that now it's little more than a second cousin, overshadowed by its brighter, bolder relations.

Take the cast. Characters that once bored us (Ward, we're looking at you) have earned a new lease of life, yes. But *SHIELD*'s entire

ensemble withers when placed next to the beautifully-rounded persona of Hayley Atwell's Peggy Carter: she's simply in a different league, a true legend alongside a bunch of fairytale sketches. And these characters also suffer when compared to those in Netflix's *Daredevil*; there will surely be Emmys for those actors (Vincent D'Onofrio's Kingpin in particular), but for the team in *SHIELD*? Nope.

The same goes for the action. Obviously the shows are wildly different in tone – think of *SHIELD* as a cartoon, *Agent Carter* as a loving homage to pulp detective tales and *Daredevil* as Shakespeare. But consider the casual way that Coulson loses his hand yet seems to shrug it off, contrasted with how we get to feel every scratch that lands on poor Matt Murdock's battered body. Naturally we'll find ourselves drawn to the more dramatic version, assuming it's better in the same way that the Academy overlooks comedies when they award the Best Picture Oscar.

Daredevil and *Agent Carter*, then, are the pedigree pooches winning all the awards at Crufts, while *SHIELD*'s the daft family Labrador who just wants to jump all over us and lick our face. On the plus side, however, this doesn't mean that we like Labradors any less. **Jayne Nelson**

BONUS FEATURES

► **New Life:** Rumours are still circulating that season two newbies Bobbi Morse, aka Mockingbird (Adrianne Palicki), and Lance Hunter (Nick Blood) might get their own *SHIELD* spin-off series. This might not happen any time soon, but ABC have hinted strongly that it could be a plan at some point in the future.

► **Friends Reunited:** Both Nick Blood and Ruth Negga (Raina) appeared in Channel 4's *Misfits*.

► **It's Wossaname!** A major character in *SHIELD*'s second year is played by Dichen Lachman, who starred as Sierra in Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse*. Her fellow "doll", Enver Gjokaj, plays Daniel Sousa in *Agent Carter*.

► **Best Lines:** May: "I miss my plane."

Coulson: "Me too. Though, if you think about it, mostly terrible stuff happened on that thing."

BROADCAST UK: AIRED ON SKY 1 US: AIRED ON THE CW

Arrow

Oliver's army goes darker still

ARROW STILL DESERVES A LOT of the credit for kicking off the current successful run of DC Comics properties on television in the States, but the third season found the creative team leaning hard into the grimmer, darker and often less entertaining aspects of the series.

As Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell) battled iconic threat Ra's al Ghul and the League of Assassins, the show became ever more serious, which is hardly a new concept for it, but made new companion series *The Flash* feel that much more fun by comparison. The *Arrow* producers have always allowed some funny elements, but this year they seemed harder to come by than ever, aside from the ever-reliable Felicity (Emily Bett Rickards) and Tony



They could do with more smilers in *Arrow*.

Stark-as-nerd-boy Ray Palmer (Brandon Routh). But the difference was never more obvious than the moments the two series crossed over, with speedster Barry Allen's (Grant Gustin) appearance in the season finale of *Arrow* a bright spot in an episode that kept things dark until the end. Hopefully the

BONUS FEATURES

► **Trivia:** Chalk up another person knowing Barry Allen's real identity, as Felicity outs him to Malcolm Merlyn (John Barrowman) in the season finale.

► **It's Wossaname!** Matt Nable, playing Ra's al Ghul, cropped up as Boss Johns in the recent *Riddick* film.

► **Spoiler Alert!** The finale appears to show Ray Palmer caught in an explosion, but since he's joining spin-off DC's *Legends Of Tomorrow*, he'll be okay.

► **Trivia:** There's a sneaky DC Easter Egg in *Ferris Air*, seen in "This Is Your Sword", referenced as closed down when "one of their test pilots went missing".

balance will be restored a little next season: no one wants an all-out farce or even for the show to reach the lighter heights of *The Flash*, but a totally brutal, unrelenting *Arrow* isn't exactly the ideal either. Hopefully more collaboration between the shows – which has proved a prime source of amusement and truly cracked the code for making crossovers work (odd scheduling issues aside) – will provide some joy to go with all of *Arrow*'s moping.

Meanwhile, the stunts and fights continue to impress, alongside the writers' willingness to play within the DC Universe. They've been so successful that you begin to wish the cinematic version could start taking more of a cue from its small-screen compatriots, but for now it definitely feels like they're existing in completely different timelines. **James White**



SPURIOUS AWARDS

Celebrating the silliest moments from the month in TV



BEST LINE OF THE MONTH

"The dwarf lives until we find a cock merchant." We're just glad we were spared the scene where the slavers inspect their merchandise in *Game Of Thrones*.

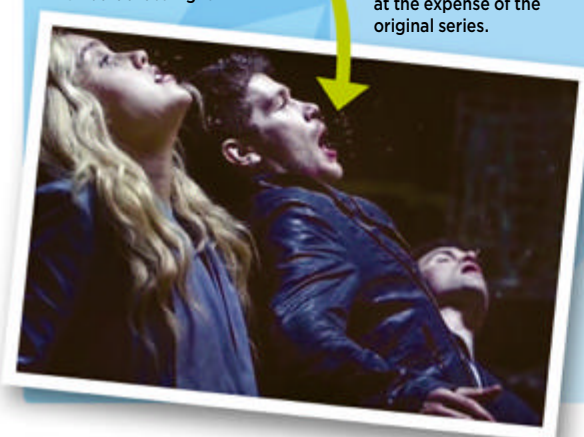
BEST OF BRITISH OF THE MONTH

It did our hearts proud that when *Have I Got News For You* needed a pic to represent British TV as a whole, they chose Daleks.



GAS EXPLOSION OF THE MONTH

The Originals really wish that their Big Bad of the season hadn't had that vinaloo last night.



TROPHY OF THE MONTH

So what exactly did Sid Bunderslaw, middle-manager at Wayne Enterprises in *Gotham*, win that award for? Burying corporate secrets?



LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE MONTH

In *The Flash*, Cisco wonders if Joe is taking the phrase "I've got your ass covered" just a little bit too literally.

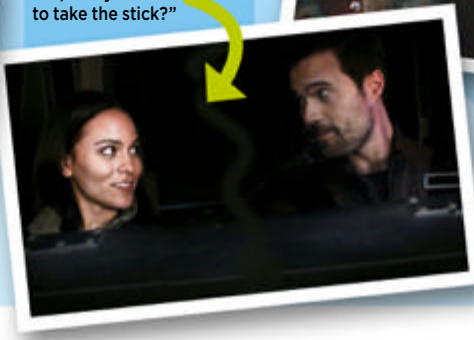
FLOATING ROCK OF THE MONTH

When this boulder hit the water then bobbed back up in *Thunderbirds* we hope that it was supposed to be an in-joke at the expense of the original series.



INUENDO OF THE MONTH

We're not surprised *SHIELD*'s Hunter and Fitz were about to vomit in the back of the jet with Ward saying things to Kara like, "Do you want to take the stick?"



TOO MUCH INFORMATION OF THE MONTH

After watching the seven-minute trailer for The CW's new *Supergirl* series, we don't feel the need to watch the actual show anymore...

UNEXPECTED RETURN OF THE MONTH

DreamWorks is prepping a film of the book *The Adventures Of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*, which should provide fresh employment for an Adipose out of work since its *Doctor Who* appearance.



LINGUISTS OF THE MONTH

"Dear god, what language is that?" asks an undead soldier in *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. To our trained ear it sounded suspiciously like Klingon.

Star Trek Fotonovels

Now you will have McCoy's screaming face imprinted on your brain.



IAN BERRIMAN, REVIEWS OVERLORD



Back in the old days, before Netflix and torrents and DVDs, being a fan of a TV series was a very different business to the way it is today. In our house, we didn't get a video recorder until 1987 (just in time for all-time *Doctor Who* stinker "Time And The Rani"... I almost wished we hadn't). Before the advent of video, revisiting a favourite adventure generally meant turning to a novelisation. In the case of '60s *Star Trek*, that meant the books by James Blish... but they crammed six or seven episodes into each slim paperback volume – far from ideal.

That's why I treasured the *Star Trek* photonovels – or "Fotonovels", as makers Mandala Productions branded them. A dozen were released in all, each adapting a classic episode of the original series by supplementing hundreds of carefully sequenced screen-captures with speech bubbles and explanatory captions.

Using photos this way wasn't exactly uniquely innovative – while in the UK it was principally the province of girls' comics like *Jackie*, on the continent there was a long-standing tradition

of "fumetti" storytelling. And it wasn't just *Star Trek* that was adapted this way, either – so were quite a few movies (indeed, for some, the *Alien* photobook was their first experience of the infamous chestbuster sequence). But the treatment seemed particularly well-suited to *Trek*, thanks to its vivid primary colours and garish alien landscapes.

The books weren't perfect – re-reading them now, I bristle at the use of triple exclamation marks, and the way the thought bubbles tend to state the bleedin' obvious. But they had their strengths. Years before VHS brought the ability to freeze-frame an image, they gave you the chance to absorb all the detail of a particular prop or costume. And sometimes that enabled you to spot something you hadn't noticed before – like the continuity-bothering moment in "Where No Man Has Gone Before" where we see Kirk's tombstone, but it bears the middle initial R, not T for Tiberius.

What I enjoyed most of all about the Fotonovels, though, was the way that they allowed you to really savour a fleeting facial expression that flashed by in the blink of an eye on-screen, whether it be Leonard Nimoy raising a quizzical eyebrow, or a wry Shatner smile. Thirty-five years later, the "City On The Edge Of Forever" book's splash page of a deranged Bones howling "Murderers!!!" is still branded on my brain... **SFX**

FACT ATTACK!

- ▶ The Italian word fumetti literally means "little puffs of smoke" – it's a reference to speech bubbles.
- ▶ The first two *Star Trek* movies were also adapted into "photostory" releases, by Pocket Books. *The Wrath Of Khan* one is in black and white. Boo!
- ▶ Other movies that received photostory adaptations include the musical *Hair*, the Steve Martin comedy *The Jerk*, and the Robert Altman film *Nashville*.
- ▶ Recently, the format's been revived by comics publishers IDW for their series *Star Trek: New Visions*. It uses photomontage to tell new adventures for the Enterprise crew.

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 22 JULY 2015 DETAILS ON PAGE 27

ADVENTURES IN SPACE AWAIT!



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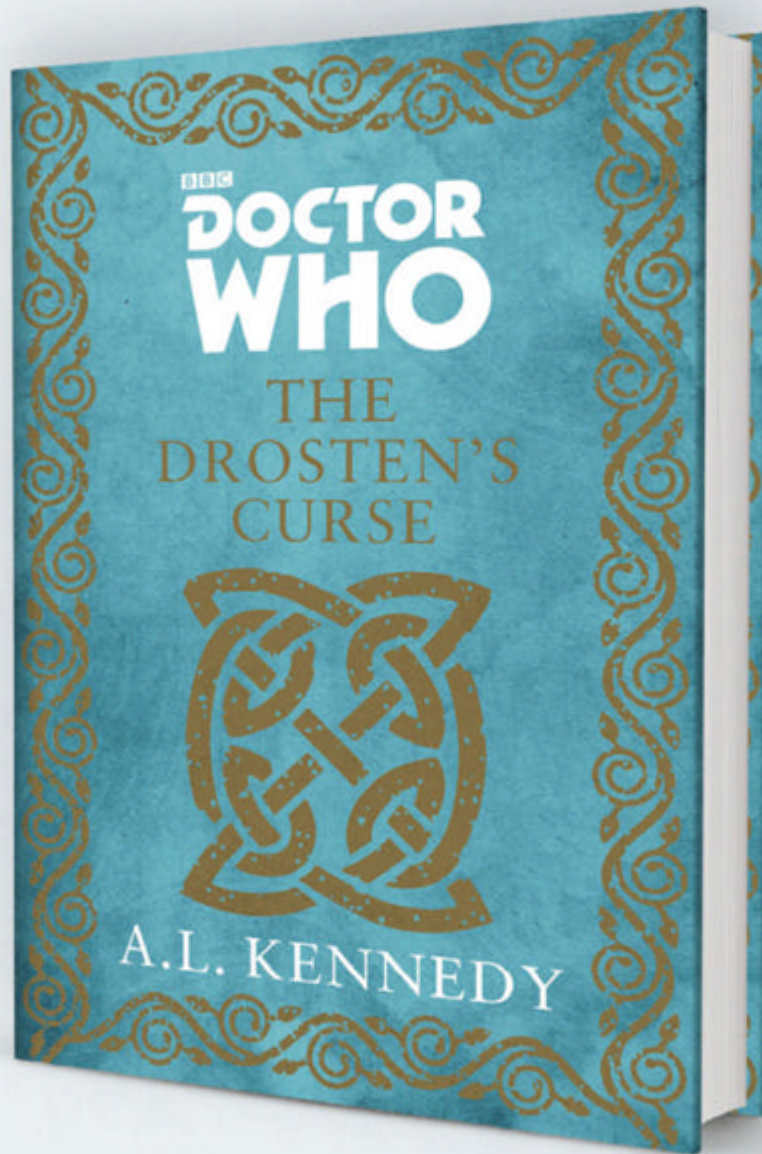
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